



MADAME SANS-GENE

FOUNDED BY L. J. B. R. R. R.
VICTORIAN SATOON

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MME. RÉJANE AS CATHARINE.

MADAME SANS-GÊNE

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE

FOUNDED ON THE PLAY

BY

VICTORIEN SARDOU

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

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MADAME SANS-GÊNE.

CHAPTER I.

THE FRICASSÉE.

IN the Rue de Bondy lighted lamps smoked and showed the entrance to a popular ball, the Vaux-Hall.

This ball, with its fantastic name, was directed by citizen Joly, an artist of the "Théâtre des Arts."

This was in the great days of July, 1792.

Louis XVI. still held a nominal royalty ; but his head, destined to the axe since the twentieth of June, rested now uncertainly on his shoulders.

Revolution thundered in the very streets.

Robespierre, Marat, and Barbaroux, the handsome Marsellais, had held a secret conclave, in which, without being able to agree in their choice of a chief—a dictator who should stand as the "Friend of the People," they had decided to make a decisive onset on the royal family, now confined in the palace of the Tuileries as in a fortress.

Men waited for the arrival of the Marseilles troops to give the signal for the insurrection.

The Prussian King and the Austrian Emperor made preparations, on their side, to throw themselves upon France, which they considered an easy prey, a nation overthrown : counting, too, upon treasons and internal dissensions for cutting a passage for their armies even to the capital.

With unwarranted arrogance the Prince of Brunswick, generalissimo of the royal and imperial armies, had issued from Coblenz his famous manifesto, in which he said :

“ If the palace of the Tuileries be forced or insulted, if there be done the least violence, the least outrage, to their majesties, the King Louis XVI. and the Queen Marie-Antoinette, or to any member of the royal family ; if their security, preservation, and liberty be not immediately insured, the Emperor and the King will take such vengeance as shall be forever memorable, in delivering up the city of Paris to a military execution and to total overthrow, and the chief conspirators to such punishment as they shall richly deserve.”

Paris answered in wildly defiant tones by organizing the uprising of the tenth of August.

But Paris is ever a volcano with two craters ; its joy ever alternates with passion.

Men armed themselves in the suburbs. They talked in the clubs, at the Commune ; they distributed cartridges to the national patriotic guards without in the least losing their taste for pleasure and their love of dancing. For people were much agitated in the days of the Revolution.

On the fresh ruins of the Bastille, at last demolished, a placard was placed, bearing the words : " Here one may dance."

And this was not irony. The good fortune which could place in the hands of the patriots the melancholy site where, through many centuries, the unfortunate victims of monarchical caprice had groaned unheard, made that a place wherein to tune the violins.

Strains of joy succeeded the melancholy hoot of the owl ; and it was, moreover, one way of proving the entire disappearance of the old régime.

The revolution was accomplished amid the singing of the " Marseillaise " and the dancing of the " Carmagnole."

To enumerate the many balls going on at that time in Paris would take much space. There was dancing at the Hôtel d'Aligré, in the Rue d'Orleans-Saint-Honoré ; at the Hôtel Biron, in the Hanoverian tent ; in the hall of the Exchequer ; at the Hôtel de Longueville ; in the Rue Filles-Saint-Thomas ; at la Modestie ; at the dance of Calypso ; in the faubourg Montmartre, at Poncherons ; at la Courtille, and lastly, at the Vaux-Hall, whither we propose to take the readers.

Like the costumes, the dances of the old school were blent with new steps ; the pavané, the minuet, and the gavotte were succeeded by the trémitz, the rigaudon, the monaco, and the popular fricassée.

On the vast floor of the Vaux-Hall one night, at the close of July, 1792, there was a great crowd, and people were amusing themselves mightily. The women were

young, agile, and well dressed, and the men were full of life.

The costumes were varied. Short breeches, with stockings, wig, and French coat, stood side by side with revolutionary long trousers ; for let us remark, in passing, that the term "sans-culottes" which was used to designate the patriots, signified simply that these went about without the customary covering for the legs ; the other faction would have said that the legs of the revolutionists were too much covered, for the citizens used more cloth and no longer wore breeches, but pantaloons.

Many uniforms shone there, for many of the national guards were in the hall, ready to rush from the scene at the first drum-call to begin a dance about the throne, the overture to the Revolution.

Among these, moving with the air of a victor, and showing to advantage as he passed around and before the pretty girls, was a tall, muscular youth, whose face was both energetic and gentle, and who wore the foppish costume of the French guard, with the red and blue cockade of the municipality of Paris. The silver braid on his sleeve indicated his rank ; he had, like many of his comrades, been a sergeant in the city militia before the disbanding of the French guards.

He passed again and again before a robust and pretty girl with honest blue eyes, who was not dancing. She eyed the fine French guardsman scornfully when he hesitated to approach her, despite the encouragement of his comrades,

"Go on, go on, Lefebvre," whispered one of the guards ; "the place is not impregnable."

"Perhaps she has herself already opened a breach," suggested another.

"If you dare not attempt it, I shall myself," added a third.

"You can see for yourself that you are the one at whom she has been looking. They are going to dance the fricassée. Ask her to dance," spoke the first man, encouraging Sergeant Lefebvre.

The latter was silent. He dared not accost that fresh young woman, who was in nowise abashed, and yet who seemed to have no chilling frost in her glance.

"Do you think so, Bernadotte ?" asked Lefebvre, of him who had last spoken, who was also a sergeant. "By Heaven ! a French soldier has never yet retreated before an enemy nor in the presence of a pretty woman. I will make the attack !"

And, leaving his comrades, Sergeant Lefebvre went straight to the pretty girl, whose eyes were now filled with angry light, and who stood ready to receive him in fine style, having overheard the disrespectful remarks the soldiers had made about her.

"Listen, girl," she said to her neighbor, "I shall teach those saucy guards whether or not I have made an opening for them."

She got up quickly, her hands on her hips, her eyes flashing, her tongue ready for use, prompt to return an answer to the attack.

The sergeant thought actions would count more than

words. So, holding out his arms, he seized the young girl by the waist, and attempted to imprint a kiss upon her neck, saying as he did so :

“ Mam’zelle, will you dance the fricassée ? ”

The girl was quick. In the twinkling of an eye, she disengaged herself, and launched out her hand in the direction of the sergeant’s cheek, to which, as he stood abashed and confounded, she applied it vigorously, saying coolly, and with a joyous ring in her voice, “ Take that, boy ! There’s your fricassée.”

The sergeant retreated a step ; rubbed his cheek ; blushed ; and, raising his hand to his three-cornered hat, said gallantly, “ Mam’zelle, I ask your pardon.”

“ Oh, there’s no offence, lad. Let that serve you as a lesson. Another time you’ll know with whom you have dealings,” replied the girl, whose anger now seemed entirely gone ; and who turned to her companion and said softly, “ He’s not at all bad, that guardsman.”

Bernadotte, meantime, who had followed with a jealous eye, when his companion had approached the pretty girl, was well satisfied to see things grow ugly, and coming up to him took him by the arm exclaiming : “ Come with us, Lefebvre. You see that nobody wants to dance with you. Perhaps mademoiselle doesn’t know how to dance the fricassée.”

“ What’s that you say ? ” The girl spoke quickly. “ I can dance the fricassée, and I shall dance it with whom I please—not with you, however. But if your comrade were to ask me politely, ah, then, I should be

glad to dance a measure with him. No ill-feeling, is there, sergeant ? ”

And the happy, light-hearted girl extended her hand to Sergeant Lefebvre.

“ Ill-feeling ? No, surely not, mademoiselle ! Yet I ask your pardon once more. That which has just passed, perhaps you will have noticed, is a little the fault of my comrades. It was Bernadotte, whom you see there, that pushed me to it. And I got simply what I deserved.”

While Lefebvre was offering his excuses, as best he could, the girl interrupted him and said bluntly, “ By your accent one would take you for an Alsatian.”

“ Born a native of the Upper-Rhine—at Ruffach,” was the response.

“ Heavens, what luck ! I am from St. Amarin,” was the girl’s rejoinder.

“ You are my country-woman, then.”

“ And you my countryman. How people do find each other, eh ? ”

“ And you are called ? ”

“ Catharine Upscher, laundress—Rue Royal—at the corner of the Rue Orties-Saint-Honoré.”

“ And I am Lefebvre, ex-sergeant of the guards ; but now in the militia.”

“ Later, countryman, we will, if you choose, learn more of each other ; but at this moment the fricassée calls us.”

And, taking him by the hand, she led him into the maze of the dancers.

As she danced past a young man with a pale, almost wan face, who wore his long hair down over his dog-like eyes, whose bearing was quiet and crafty, and whose long coat looked like a cassock, he said haughtily, "What! Catharine among the guards?"

"You know this Catharine?" asked Sergeant Bernadotte, who had heard the remark.

"Oh, in all faith, all honor!" replied the clerical-looking youth; "she is my laundress. A good girl, worthy, proper, virtuous—with open heart, and ready tongue. Throughout the quarter she is called for her frank speech and emphatic ways, 'Mlle. Sans-Gêne.'"

The music of the orchestra grew louder, and the rest of the conversation was lost in the wild tumult of the fricassée.

CHAPTER II.

THE PREDICTION.

THE dance ended, Sergeant Lefebvre conducted his countrywoman to her place. Peace had been established. They talked like two old acquaintances and walked arm in arm like lovers.

Lefebvre, to insure the continuance of amity, proposed taking some refreshments.

"Agreed," said Catharine. "Oh, I do not stand on ceremony. You seem to me a good sort of fellow; and, faith, I shall not refuse your polite offer, especially as the fricassée makes one thirsty. Let us sit here."

They took their places at one of the tables which stood about the room.

Lefebvre seemed quite charmed at the turn things had taken. He had, nevertheless, a moment's hesitation before seating himself.

"What's the matter?" demanded Catharine, brusquely.

"Look you, mam'zelle, it is this," he answered, somewhat embarrassed, "we are not accustomed among the guards, nor yet in the militia, to act like Switzers."

"Oh, I understand—your comrades. Well, ask them. Do you want me to call them?"

And without waiting his permission she rose, mounted a green wooden bench which stood beside the table, and making a speaking trumpet of her hands, called to the three guards who stood at a distance, looking with something of amusement at the sport of the couple.

"Ohe! lads—come over here! We will not eat you! Besides, to watch others drinking gives one the blues."

The three guards found no difficulty in answering the familiar invitation.

"What! Not going, Bernadotte?" asked one of the guards of the sergeant who lingered behind.

"I want to talk with the citizen," answered Bernadotte, in a cross tone, jealous of the ascendancy of a comrade, and wishing, despite the evident success Lefebvre had scored with the pretty laundress, to hold himself aloof and affect to converse with the young man with the long frock and dog-like eyes.

"Oh, the citizen isn't in the way," cried Catharine ; "I know him, and he knows me. Well ! is it not so, Citizen Fouché ?"

So called, the young man came toward the table on which Lefebvre had ordered warm wines and pastry to be served ; and said, as he greeted them, "Since Mademoiselle Catharine desires it, I come. We will be seated. I love to find myself among the valiant defenders of the city."

The four guards and the citizen called Fouché seated themselves ; and, glasses having been filled, they drank together.

Catharine and Lefebvre, who had already attempted several quiet gallantries, drank, unnoticed, from the same glass.

Lefebvre, growing bolder, now endeavored to snatch a kiss.

Catharine drew back.

"Not that, countryman !" she said. "I will laugh gayly with you ; but no more."

"You scarce looked for modesty in a washerwoman, soldier, did you ?" said Fouché. "Ah ! in such matters she is not complaisant at any time, our Mlle. Sans-Gêne."

"Speak up, Citizen Fouché," said Catharine quickly ; "you know me, for I do your laundry-work—in the three months since you came from Nantes, is there any one dare say anything against me ?"

"No—nothing—absolutely nothing !"

"I will consent to play thus ; to dance a fricassée at

times ; even to drink with such good lads as you seem to be ; but no one in the quarter, or elsewhere, mark you, dare boast that he has crossed the threshold of my chamber. My work-room is open to all the world ; but to my bed-chamber but one shall have the key ! ”

“ And who may that lucky fellow be ? ” asked Lefebvre, twirling his moustache.

“ My husband,” was Catharine’s haughty reply ; and clicking her glass against Lefebvre’s she added, laughing, “ Then, being married, countryman, what have you to say ? ”

“ That it were not so ill for him, in such a case,” replied the sergeant, still caressing his moustache. “ To your health, mam’zelle ! ”

“ To yours, citizen, and to the fulfilment of your wishes.”

And they all drank gayly, laughing merrily at the light sally.

At that moment, a singular figure wearing a pointed cap, and dressed in a long black robe, spangled with silver stars and blue crescents, and long-tailed comets, glided among the tables like a spectre.

“ Look ! it is Fortunatus ! ” cried Bernadotte. “ It is the magician. Who wants to have his fortune told ? ”

Every dance, in those days, had its sorcerer, or its reader of cards, predicting the future and revealing the past, for the sum of five sous.

In the confusion of a period such as that which preceded the tenth of August, when an old social order

disappeared entirely to give place to a new, in a change whose rapidity was almost fairy-like, a belief in the marvellous was, naturally, prevalent.

Cagliostro and his glass, Mesmer and his trough, had quite upset the heads of the aristocracy. Popular credulity was given to the soothsayers of the cross-roads, and to the astrologers of the taverns.

Catharine burned to know the future. It seemed to her that her meeting with the handsome sergeant would in some way alter her life.

Just as she was about to ask Lefebvre to call Fortunatus and question him for her, the magician turned to answer a group of three young men at an opposite table.

"Let us hear what he says to them," whispered Catharine, indicating their neighbors.

"I know one of them," said Bernadotte, "he is called Andoche Junot. He is a Burgundian. I met him frequently in the battalion of the Côté-d'Or."

"The second is an aristocrat," said Lefebvre ; "he is called Pierre de Marmont. He, also, is a Burgundian, and comes from Chatillon."

"And the third ?" asked Fouché, "the lean young man with the olive complexion and hollow eyes ? I have seen him before. But where ?"

"In my work-room, doubtless," said Catharine, blushing slightly ; "he is an artillery officer who has laid down his commission—he expects an appointment—he lives near me, at the Hôtel des Patriotes, in the Rue Royal-Saint-Roch."

"A Corsican?" asked Fouché. "They all live at that hotel. He has a strange name, that client of yours—Berna—Buna—Bina—no, that's not it," cried he, trying to find the name which had escaped him.

"Bonaparte," said Catharine.

"Yes, that's it—Bonaparte—Timoleon, I think."

"Napoleon," answered Catharine, "he is a wise youth, and, one who impresses every one who meets him."

"He has a strange name, this Napoleon Bonaparte, and a melancholy air. Ah, if he should ever attain to anything he ought to change that name," muttered Fouché; adding, "Listen! The magician is speaking to them. What can he be saying to them?"

The four young men grew silent and pricked their ears, while Catharine, grown suddenly serious, impressed by the presence of the sorcerer, whispered to Lefebvre: "I wish he would predict good luck for Bonaparte. He's such a deserving young man: He supports his four brothers and his sisters, yet he is far from rich. I've never been able to present him a bill; though he owes me for several washings," she added, with the air of an alarmed merchant.

Fortunatus, meantime, balancing his pointed hat, read, gravely, the hand which the young man whom Bernadotte had called Junot, extended to him.

"Thou," he said, in a deep voice, "thy career shall be bright and well-rounded—thou shalt be the friend of a great man—shalt share in his glory—on thy head shall rest a ducal crown—thou wilt triumph in the South."

"Bravo ! I am really already half a soldier. Thou art consoling, friend ! But tell me, after so much good fortune, how shall I die !"

"Madman," said the sorcerer in a hollow voice.

"The devil ! The beginning of thy prophecy was worth more than the end," cried the second, laughing. It was he whom Bernadotte had called Marmont. "Dost predict insanity for me, too ?"

"No ! Thou shalt live for the ruin of the country, and to thine own shame. After a life of glory and honor, thou wilt abandon thy master, betray thy country, and thy name shall be synonymous with that of Judas."

"Thou favorest me greatly in thy prediction," said Marmont, with a sneer. "What wilt thou tell our comrade ?"

He pointed to the young artillery officer in whom Catharine was so much interested. But he, drawing his hand back quickly, said gruffly : "I do not wish to be told the future. I know it." And, turning to his friends, he pointed above the wall that enclosed the Vaux-Hall, to where the sky showed through the tent-covering of the dancing-hall.

"Do you see that star up there ?" he said in a ringing voice. "No ? You see it not ! Well, I can see it. It is my star."

The magician had moved on. Catharine motioned to him ; he approached the group, and, looking at two of the guards, said to them : "Profit by your youth. Your days are numbered."

"And where are we to die ?" asked one of the young

men, destined to fall among the heroes who died for liberty, shot down by the Swiss Guards.

"On the steps of a palace."

"What grandeur!" cried Bernadotte, "dost thou see for me, too, a tragic death and a palace?"

"No, thy death will be peaceful: thou shalt occupy a throne, and after disowning thy colors and fighting thy comrades-in-arms, thou shalt lie in a foreign tomb, beside a frozen ocean."

"If my comrades take everything, what will be left for me?" asked Lefebvre.

"Thou," said Fortunatus, "shalt marry the lady of thy heart, thou shalt command a formidable army, and thy name shall ever stand for bravery and loyalty."

"And I, Sir Magician," said Catharine, frightened, perhaps, for the first time in her life.

"You, mademoiselle, will be the wife of him you love—you will be a duchess."

"Then I'll have to become a duke—a generalship will not suffice me," exclaimed Lefebvre gayly. "Ah, sorcerer, finish thy prophecy. Tell me that I shall marry Catharine, and that together we shall become duke and duchess!"

But Fortunatus had passed on, slowly, among the smiling men and attentive women.

"Well, really," said Fouché, "this magician is not inventive. He predicted great destinies for you all; but to me he said nothing. Am I then to be a nobody?"

"You have been made curate," said Catharine. "What would you like to become?"

"I was simply a reader, my dear. At present I am a patriot, an enemy of tyrants. What I'd like to become? Oh, that is simple enough—Minister of Police."

"You may get there. You are such a very devil and so conversant with everything that goes on, Citizen Fouché," retorted Catharine.

"Yes; I shall be chief of police when you are a duchess," he rejoined, with a strange smile that lit up his sad countenance and softened his fierce profile.

The ball was over. The four young men rose gayly and moved on, laughing at the sorcerer and his magic.

Catharine took the arm of Lefebvre, who had obtained leave to escort her to the door of her work-room.

Before them walked their three neighbors, Napoleon Bonaparte a little apart from his two friends, Junot and Marmont. He spoke but little, and was grave and reserved; now and again, however, he raised his eyes to the blue firmament above as if seeking for that star of which he had spoken, and which shone for him alone.

CHAPTER III.

THE LAST NIGHT OF ROYALTY.

THE tenth of August was a Friday.

The night between the ninth and tenth was mild, starry, serene. At midnight the moon shed its pure lustre on the town, apparently calm, peaceful and slumbering.

Paris, meantime, had slept for a fortnight past with one eye open, with hand on sword, ready to rise at the first alarm.

Since that night when Lefebvre had met the laundress Catharine at Vaux-Hall the city had become a furnace. The revolution boiled as in a mighty cauldron.

The Marseilles troops had come, filling the streets and the clubs with their ardor, their fiery patriotism and martial force. They had given to the echoes the immortal hymn of the army of the Rhine, the result of the inspired genius and throbbing heart of Rouget de Lisle. They had brought it to the Parisians, who, instead of calling this song, which was to be always a national one, "La Française," gave it, generously, the name of "La Marseillaise."

Court and people prepared for the fray, and for a great day's work. The nobles barricaded the palace of the Tuileries and established there a garrison of Swiss Guards, commanded by Courbevoie and De Rueil ; convened all the high-born fanatics who had been styled, after that banquet of October, when the national cockade had been trampled under foot, the "Chevaliers du Poignard."

That great day which marks the first victory of the Revolution and the dawn of the Republic (for the twenty-second of September served only to proclaim and legalize the triumphant action of the tenth of August), no man could boast of having organized, commanded, or directed it.

Danton slept with Camille Desmoulins while they

searched for him to bring him to the tribune. Marat slept in his cave. Robespierre lived apart—he was only chosen as the eleventh member of the Commune. Barbaroux had declined the honor of leading the Marseillais, and Santerre, the great agitator of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, figured in the fight only in the middle of the day.

The nameless insurrection of August 10, a battle without a commander-in-chief, had for its general the mob, and for heroes all the nation.

The movement did not begin until after midnight on that radiant night of the ninth.

The emissaries of the forty-seven sections had demanded the downfall of royalty—one, the Mauconseil section, having voted—tramped silently about the streets transmitting from door to door this order :

“ To arms when you hear the tocsin sound and fight fiercely.”

Within an hour the tocsin was heard in various places. The clock of St. Germain-d'Auxerrois, which had chimed for the massacre of St. Bartholomew, sounded the doom of monarchy.

At the peal of the drums, beating the call to arms, Paris arose, grasped its guns, and rubbed its sleepy eyes.

The moon was set. Shadow wrapped the town. But in every window, one after another, lights appeared. This sudden illumination as for a fête had a sinister omen.

A strange dawn, in which the smoke of battle, the

blaze of burning buildings, and reek of blood, almost obscured the sun.

The city gates opened one by one to admit armed men, who passed through them, questioned the sky, and pricked their ears, listening for the approach of their own sections, that they might enter the ranks. They watched the daylight coming up over the roofs.

The call to arms was heard in the streets and in the lanes. In the courts sounded the rattling of batteries that were being dragged to position, the metallic ring of the bayonets, whose sockets men tried, and the click of sabres and pikes.

The houses near the Tuileries had all their shutters thrown back and several shops, even, were open.

Mademoiselle Sans-Gêne was by no means the last to put her nose out. Dressed in a short petticoat, with only a light covering over her beating heart, and with a dainty nightcap on her head, she listened at the window to the sounds of the night, heard the drum, and distinguished the tocsin. Hastening into her work-room to strike a light, she then cautiously half-opened the door.

The Rue Royal-Saint-Roch, where the washer-woman's house was situated, was now empty.

Catharine stopped, looked, listened. It was not only curiosity which made her so keen for a sight of the troops in arms.

She was a good patriot, Sans-Gêne, but another sentiment than hate of the tyrant animated her now.

After the fricassée dance at Vaux-Hall, she had seen Sergeant Lefebvre again.

They had grown to know each other better. At a small party at La Rapée, whither he had without much difficulty induced her to go, they had exchanged vows and talked over projects. The ex-sergeant had become rather familiar ; but Catharine had told him so plainly that she would never give herself to any one, save as a *wife*, that the sergeant had ended by asking her to marry him.

She had accepted.

“ We have not much,” she had said gayly, “ to begin housekeeping on. I have my laundry, where bad debts are never lacking.”

“ And I have my commission ; and a soldier’s pay is often in arrears.”

“ Never mind ! we are young, we love each other, and have the future before us. The sorcerer promised me the other day, did he not, that I should be a duchess ? ”

“ And did he not say I should be a general ? ”

“ He said, besides, you should marry her you love.”

“ Well, let us realize the beginning of his augury, at once.”

“ Oh, you are impatient ; I cannot marry at once. I must prepare.”

“ Then let us fix a date, Catharine.”

“ At the fall of the tyrant, if you like.”

“ Yes, that suits me : I abhor tyrants—look, Catharine, at this ! ”

Turning back his sleeve, Lefebvre showed her his right arm superbly tattooed—two sabres crossed with a grenade in flames, surmounted by the words, "Death to tyrants !"

"Hem ! I am a patriot," he said proudly, holding out his bare arm triumphantly.

"It is fine," said Catharine, with conviction, and she put out her hand to touch it.

"Don't touch it," said Lefebvre quickly ; "it is quite fresh."

Catharine had drawn back her hand, afraid of injuring such fine work.

"Don't be afraid. It will not hurt the color ; but it must dry. Listen ! in a few days, you shall have something better than this."

"What ?" Catharine had asked curiously.

"My wedding gift," had been the mysterious answer.

He had not wanted to say more, and having drunk gayly at the tavern, to the fall of the tyrant and their approaching wedding, which should follow upon it, Catharine and her lover had taken the Charenton diligence to the Rue Bouloi, thence had proceeded on foot, under the keen eyes of the stars, to the Rue Royal-Saint-Roch, where, gaining her own door, the young girl, to avoid a tender parting, closed it quickly in the sergeant's face, crying :

"Good-night, Lefebvre. Here you may enter when you are my husband."

Since then, every moment which he could spare from his duties, Lefebvre had spent in seeking the

laundry, and passing a few moments with his country-woman.

They had both begun to feel that the tyrant took rather long to die. Thus it was natural that Catharine should look, with the twofold impatience of a good patriot and a girl on the eve of her marriage, for that dawn of the tenth of August.

The tocsin, flinging its funereal notes on the night air, sounded at the Tuileries the *De Profundis* of royalty, and for the little laundress, the "Alleluia" of marriage.

Two neighbors in night array, had imitated Catharine, and stood by their doors waiting for news.

"Is there any news, Mam'zelle Sans-Gêne?" asked one of them, across the street.

"I am waiting, neighbor. Listen! Have patience, and we shall know all."

Breathless with his quick run, Lefebvre equipped and armed, now entered from the Rue Saint-Honoré, deposited his gun beside the door, and caught the laundress in an impassioned embrace.

"Ah, my good Catharine, I am glad to see you! It is warm already. It is going to be warmer. The motto for to-day is, 'Long live the nation.'"

The neighbors, who now timidly approached, asked what had passed.

"Well," said Lefebvre, striking an attitude, like one who had come to read a proclamation; "I must tell you, first, that they wanted to assassinate the good M. Pétion, the mayor of Paris."

An indignant murmur rose from his audience.

"What has been done with the tyrant?" asked one.

"They have held him as hostage. Picture to yourselves the palace as a veritable fortress—the windows boarded up, the doors barricaded. The Swiss Guards are armed to the teeth, and with them are those villains, the Chevaliers du Poignard, traitors, friends of the strangers—they are sworn to kill the patriots. Oh, let but one fall into my hands in the day that is coming, and I'll settle his account quickly," cried Lefebvre, with almost savage energy.

"Go on," said Catharine; "there aren't any Chevaliers du Poignard here, and I doubt if you'll find any on the road; now tell us what happened to M. Pétion."

"Called before the Assembly—there, at least, he is safe—Oh, he escaped."

"Have they done any fighting yet?"

"No, only one man has been killed—Mandat, the commander of the National Guards."

"Your chief! He was of the Swiss faction?"

"He was on their side. There was found, over his signature, an order to shoot the patriots from the suburbs behind, when they reached the Pont-Neuf to join their comrades from Saint-Marceau and Saint-Victor; but the treason was discovered. The traitor, called to the Hôtel de Ville to explain himself, was finished by a pistol-shot from among the crowd. Nothing can now impede the onward march of the sections. To-night, Catharine, we will win, and within eight hours we will marry. Hold! My wedding gift—I promised it to you."

And, before the somewhat embarrassed neighbors, he bared his left arm, showing a second tattooing, representing two hearts aflame.

"Look," he said, "what is written here : To Catharine, for life !"

He stepped back, to give them a better view of the design.

"It is fine—much finer than the other," said Catharine, crimson with pleasure, and she clung to the sergeant's neck, murmuring, "Oh, my own Lefebvre, thou art so handsome, and I love thee so much !"

At this moment, shots rent the heavy air from afar—cannon answered.

"Away ! Catharine ! I must go where duty calls ; be calm ; we shall return victorious," cried Lefebvre joyously.

And, as he picked up his gun, he embraced her again, and hurried off in the direction of the Tuileries.

The Swiss had fired upon a poorly-armed crowd, who now held parley with them. Corpses already covered the vestibule of the Tuileries and the three courts of the Carrousel.

But the cannon of the patriots had sent their missiles to signify to royalty its end.

Louis XVI. had sought refuge in the National Assembly, which had again met at two o'clock in the morning, at the sound of the tocsin. While awaiting developments, the legislators, under the presidency of Vergniaud, had discussed the abolition of the negro trade. The sacred

cause of human liberty had that day been defended as a whole, without distinction of race or color.

The journalistic stenographer, as we would call him to-day, related that, seated in his corner, the royal blockhead tranquilly ate a peach, deaf to the belching of the cannon which was to shatter his throne, indifferent to the fate of the Swiss, unmindful of the nobles who were dying for him.

It was a great day ! The last night of royalty was spent and the Marsellais, chanting their immortal hymn, had gone forth to destroy the last stronghold of feudalism.

CHAPTER IV.

A CHEVALIER DU POIGNARD.

IT was noon ere the cannon had ceased to roar in the neighborhood of the Tuileries. Confused murmurs arose, among which one could vaguely distinguish cries of " Victory ! Victory ! "

Heavy clouds floated over the houses ; while sparks and scraps of burning paper and cloth, whirled about and fell in the streets.

Many were the changes of fortune on that ever-memorable day.

The sections had each named three emissaries, who were to form the Commune of Paris. Pétion, the mayor, called to the Hôtel de Ville, had been consigned to his own house, to be set at liberty at the end

of the insurrection. Mandat, found guilty of treason, was dead. Santerre had been named, in his place, commander of the National Guards.

The arsenal had been forced, and arms distributed to a first division from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, who had come to put themselves under orders.

The king, after reviewing the battalions of the National Guards required for the defence of the palace, had re-entered his apartments sadly. The Petits Pères, and the Butte-du-Moulins were the only ones who had hailed him. The others had shouted "Long live the nation! Down with the 'Veto'!" and the cannoneers had turned their pieces so that they threatened the palace.

Louis XVI. saw that he was lost, and felt his power and his glory vanish. He went to demand safety of the National Assembly, whose executive hall, at that time, was at the "Marège," near the garden of the Tuileries, and on the right of it, where to-day, in the Rue de Rivoli, stands the Hôtel Continental. Three hundred National Guards and three hundred Swiss escorted him.

There were, in all, nine hundred and fifty Swiss, well-armed and well-disciplined. Most of them spoke only German. These household troops, attached to the person of the king, faithful, to the full measure of their honor, in loyalty and affection, had decided to die for the master for whom they had enlisted, and who paid them.

Ignorant of the situation, the Swiss Guards, deceived

by their captains, and excited by the Chevaliers du Poignard, believed, even at the dawn of the tenth of August, that they were employed to defend the king's person against brigands, who came to kill him. Many, as one of their colonels, M. Pfyffer, testified, were astounded and frightened when they beheld, instead of a popular raid on the palace, the advance of the National Guards.

The uniform confused them. They thought to have only the popular uprising, against whose ugliness all good citizens would protest, and they saw, instead, an armed and organized nation advancing against them.

One might have thought that blood would have been spared, when the retreat of Louis XVI. had been accomplished, had not one of those terrible accidents which moments of confusion are apt to produce, given the signal for a pitiless massacre.

The Marsellais and Bretons, having as commander, a friend of Danton's, one Westermann, an Alsatian ; once an under-officer, and an energetic soldier, had penetrated the courts of the palace. It had three, at that time, and the Carrousel, much more limited then than to-day, was covered with houses.

Westermann had arranged his troops in line of battle. The Swiss were posted in the windows of the palace, ready to fire.

They watched each other. Westermann spoke a few words, in German, to the Swiss, to dissuade them from firing on the people, and to encourage them to fraternize.

Already, some of those unfortunate mercenaries had thrown their cartridges through the windows, in sign of disarming.

The patriots, encouraged and reassured by these demonstrations of peace, were lounging under the vestibule of the palace.

A barrier had been placed at the foot of the steps of the great stairway, leading to the chapel.

On each step two Switzers mounted guard, one beside the wall, the other by the banisters ; they stood, motionless, silent, and stern, gun in position, ready to fire.

What with their tall stature, their fur caps, and their red uniforms, these mountaineers in regimentals were an imposing sight, and one that might well inspire fear.

But there were none but the confederate Marsellais and Bretons in that crowd. The scum of the streets were crowding round. Ruffians can be found at all times and in all places : one is sure to find them well up in front, on the days of fighting, on the morning of an execution, or on the enemy after a battle.

Some of those clownish Parisians thought to draw toward them, with hooks and pikes, two or three of the most steadfast of the Swiss.

The men thus caught allowed themselves to be easily snared, content to escape a possible brawl, and believing themselves outnumbered.

This sport of fishing for the Swiss was being continued, amid shouts of laughter from the bystanders, when suddenly, without any one's being able to place

its source, a volley of projectiles was launched upon the inoffensive, amused but not threatening crowd.

The correct theory is supposed to be this, that some nobles, posted on the upper palisade, seeing the trapped Swiss yielding without resistance, and ready to fraternize, suddenly fired, hoping to stop the defection and create a bloody breach between the people and the guard.

The two Swiss now among the people, were the first to be struck down.

The shot, coolly directed by the defenders of the palace, did its dreadful work.

In a moment the vestibule was full of corpses, and blood flowed in rivers over the slabs.

A dense smoke enveloped the vestibule.

At the signal of the shots from within, a fusilade was begun above.

The Swiss and the nobles, many of whom had taken to the uniform of the guard, ran to the shelter of the barricaded windows.

All their shots told.

The courts were empty. The Carrousel was swept bare. Then the Swiss made a vigorous sortie as far as the Rue Saint-Honoré.

But the Marsellais, the Bretons, and the National Guards returned in force, with cannon. The Swiss were cut off, the palace was invaded. Nothing could withstand the triumphant crowd. Most of the Swiss were slain in the apartments, or in the gardens ; they were pursued even to the Champs-Élysées. Many

owed their lives to the victors, who defended them against the violence of the mob.

The king had given directions for the Swiss to cease firing. He had given the order to M. de Hervilly, but this chief of the Chevaliers du Poignard, reserved for himself the right to issue it when he thought circumstances warranted. Like the queen, he believed that the power remained with the defenders of the palace and that the fire of the Swiss only served the "rabble" rightly. When he saw his mistake, it was too late: the palace was in the hands of the people, and the king, a prisoner in the power of the Assembly, was shortly incarcerated in the Temple.

Catharine, who feared no longer, after having followed feelingly the beginning of the engagement, quite reassured, and not minding the shots, had ventured forth with the intention of reaching the Carrousel. She wanted to see if the tyrant would yield with a good grace, and thus hasten her nuptials. And besides, she told herself, that, perhaps, among the combatants, she could see her dear Lefebvre.

This idea of surprising him, black with powder, fighting in the front of battle, like a demon, under fire, far from making her afraid, emboldened her.

She wanted to be near him, to be able to hand him his cartridges—more than that; she wanted to grasp a musket herself, load it, and fire on the defenders of the tyrant. She felt within her the soul of a warrior, at the very smell of the powder. She wanted to share all the dangers of her Lefebvre; she was both

proud and a little jealous of the glory he should gain.

Not once did it occur to her that she might be struck by the bullets of the Swiss.

Had not the augury foretold that he should command armies, and that she should be his wife? Neither he nor she was destined to die that day.

Thus, braving peril, she advanced ever nearer to the cannoneers and the Marseillais, seeking for Lefebvre and scorning death.

When the furious fusilade of the Swiss began, people had flown wildly apart. In the movement, Catharine felt herself drawn by the mass of fugitives toward the Rue Saint-Honoré. Arriving opposite her room, she returned to it, believing that the panic might spread that far, and some one might enter her dwelling.

She had not lost all hope, but she began to fear lest her wedding would be put off.

"Ah, those men! They haven't even the heart to slacken their pace," she groaned, as she stopped, raging, at the door of her laundry. "Oh! if I had had a musket, I should have remained! I know well that Lefebvre is not saved!"

And, feverishly, impatiently, she kept her ears pricked, listening for the victory for which she waited.

When the cannon began again to thunder loudly, she trembled with joy and shouted, "Ah! that is ours! Bravo! the cannoneers!"

Then she listened again.

The cannon shots multiplied, the fusilade increased;

confused cries reached her. Surely it must be the patriots advancing ! They had the victory !

Ah ! how she longed to see her Lefebvre once more safe and sound, to embrace her victor, and say to him, " Can we be married at once ? "

She came and went feverishly in her work-room, whose shutters she had prudently left closed.

She dared not give way to her desire to return to the scene of battle, lest Lefebvre should return in her absence. He would be alarmed and would not know where to look for her. It would be best to wait for him. He must surely return by the Rue Royal-Saint-Roch with his comrades when the palace was taken.

The street had become once more quiet and deserted.

The neighbors were shut in their houses.

The noon-hour came. She heard occasional shots.

Through her half-open door she saw from afar, on the side toward the Rue Saint-Honoré, flying shadows, pursued by armed men.

They were the last defenders of the palace, who were being chased through the streets.

Suddenly, after two or three discharges quite near to her, she heard what seemed like the sound of quick footsteps in the alley that led to the other door of her work-room on the Rue Saint-Honoré.

She trembled.

" There seems to be some one there," she murmured. " Yes—there's some one walking—who can have come here ? "

Bravely she ran, took down the bar of the alley door, and opened it.

A man appeared, pale, weak and blood-stained, holding his hand to his breast; he dragged himself along painfully.

The wounded man wore a uniform of white with knee-breeches and silk stockings.

He was not a patriot; he had fought, surely, in the ranks of the enemies of the people.

"Who are you? And what do you want?" she said firmly.

"A victim—I am wounded—they pursue me—give me shelter—save me, for Heaven's sake, madame—I am the Count of Neipperg. I am an Austrian officer——"

He could say no more.

A bloody foam came to his lips. His face became frightfully pale.

He fell on the threshold of the alley.

Catharine, seeing this elegant young man falling before her, his coat and vest already blood-stained, gave a cry of pity and affright.

"Ah, poor boy," she said, "how they have settled things for him! He is doubtless an aristocrat—he has fired on the people—he is not even a Frenchman—he said he was an Austrian. It's all the same, he's a man just the same."

And, moved by that instinct of good which is found in the heart of every woman, even the most energetic—for in even a robust warrior maid, there lies a sweet sister of charity—Catharine knelt, touched the wounded

man's breast, gently took away the blood-stained linen, and tried to assure herself whether or not he was dead.

"He breathes," she said joyously; "perhaps I can save him!"

So, running to the trough she filled a bowl with fresh water, and after having taken the precaution of closing the street-door solidly, by thrusting back the bar, she returned to the wounded man.

She made a compress, tearing up the first linen garment near at hand.

In her hurry she had not noticed that she was tearing up a man's shirt.

"Ah, I've made a pretty mess," she said to herself, "I've taken the shirt of a customer."

She looked at the mark.

"It belongs to that poor little artillery captain, Napoleon Bonaparte! The poor boy has none too many. And besides, he owes me a big bill! Well, just the same, I'll get him a new shirt. I will go and buy it, and take it to him and tell him I burned his with my iron. I hope he'll take it; he is so proud. Ah! he's one who pays little attention to his clothes—not much more than he does to women, alas!" she added with a gentle sigh.

While thinking of the customer whose linen she had torn to rags, Catharine had lightly changed her compresses on the wound of the Austrian officer, who was not looked for at the house of so good a patriot as herself.

The appearance of this young man, perhaps mortally

wounded, so pale and weak, whose strength, and life even, ebbed through a gaping wound, had changed all Catharine's sentiments.

She was no longer now an Amazon in petticoats, who had advanced among the combatants, bounding with joy at every volley, and wishing to have a musket, that she might take part in the feast of death.

She had become a saving angel, who strove to relieve human suffering.

A curse against war almost rose to her lips, and she said to herself that men had become savages to kill each other thus.

But she repeated at the same time her hate and her anathema against the king and queen, who had made these fatal butcheries necessary.

"He is an Austrian," she murmured. "What was he doing here, in his white uniform? Defending this Austrian woman! Madame Veto! But he has not the air of a bad man."

She looked at him attentively. "He is so young—at most twenty. One might almost think him a girl."

Then the professional observation came: "His linen is fine! batiste! Oh, he is an aristo——"

And she sighed, as she said, "What a pity!"

Under the healing influence of the cold water, and the compresses which closed the wound and stopped the flow of blood, the wounded man opened his dying eyes slowly and looked about, in search of something.

With consciousness the impression of danger returned,

He made a movement to rise.

"Do not kill me," he murmured in a supreme and instinctive effort, extending his arms before him, as if to parry the thrusts of invisible enemies.

Making a great effort and collecting, by a supreme effort of will, all his forces, he was able to say: "You are Catharine Upscher—of Saint-Amarin? It was Mademoiselle de Laveline who sent me to you. She told me you were good—that you would help and succor me. I will explain to you later."

"Mademoiselle Blanche de Laveline?" asked Catharine, stupidly—"the daughter of the seigneur of Saint-Amarin—my protector. She who helped me to begin work—to buy my place. Do you, then, know her? Ah! for her, there is no peril I would not brave. You were right to come here. You are safe here; come; and he who finds your hiding-place must do so over my body!"

The wounded man tried to speak. Doubtless he wanted to call again upon the name of this Blanche de Laveline, who seemed to have so great an influence on Catharine.

Catharine imposed silence on him, saying, "Be calm, dismiss your fears;" and she added in a motherly tone, "no one will kill you. Mademoiselle Blanche will be pleased to know that you are in my care, though with a patriot."

She stopped herself, and meditatively added: "What have I said to him? These Austrians do not know what patriots are? They are subjects, slaves. You

are with a friend," Catharine resumed, raising her voice.

Neipperg dropped to the ground. His senses, roused for a moment, had now left him.

But he had heard Catharine's compassionate voice, and knew that he was safe.

An expression of unspeakable joy and recognition crossed his wan face. He was with a friend—the name of Blanche de Laveline would protect him ; he had nothing to fear.

With a further effort he half-opened his eyes, extended his blood-stained and cold hand, seeking Catharine's warm one.

"It is well—be calm !—let me take care of you, Austrian," said Catharine, mastering her feelings.

And, slowly, anxiously, she said to herself, "He must lie more comfortably, more softly—but I am not strong enough to carry him to the bed. Ah ! if Lefebvre were here—but he does not come. Oh, can he be——"

She did not finish the thought. The idea that Lefebvre might be lying, like this foreign officer, lifeless, and blood-stained, presented itself to her for the first time, and she shivered with fright.

"How terrible is war !" she murmured.

But her energetic nature re-asserted itself, and she sighed.

"Bah ! Lefebvre is too brave too strong to be like this little aristocrat. He is a receptacle for balls. Lefebvre ! he'd take half a dozen into his body with-

Madame Sans-Gené.

out so much as a cry ! He is not cut like these young sprigs. And this one volunteered to defend Madame Veto ! He dared to fire on the people ! ”

She shrugged her shoulders and looked again at the wounded man.

“ It is impossible to leave him here—he will die surely. What shall I do ? He is a friend of Mademoiselle Blanche. I cannot let him die so ! I must do my utmost to revive him.”

Then suddenly a thought struck her. “ Maybe he is betrothed to Mademoiselle Blanche.”

“ It were droll, indeed, if I should help her to marry, when she promised me a dowry ! Oh, I must save the young man ! Yet my Lefebvre does not come ! ” she repeated anxiously, seeking for a means of carrying the Austrian.

Then she reflected, “ It is, perhaps, better that Lefebvre is not here. Oh, it is not that he would be angry or reproach me for sparing an aristocrat ; when he found him to be a friend of my best friend, he would say nothing—and, besides, after the battle, a French soldier knows no enemies. Lefebvre has told me that often ; but he’s as jealous as a tiger. It would displease him to see me dressing the wound of this aristocrat ; then he might demand to know how this young man happened to seek refuge with me. ‘ To demand a shelter of you, he must have known you ; ’ that is what he would say—but I know well how I would answer him—nevertheless, I’d rather he should not see him.”

And once more she tried to lift the body of the young Austrian, now become heavy through unconsciousness.

Just then some one struck the street door. Catharine trembled. She listened, as pale now as the wounded man.

"Who can it be?" she asked herself. "My work-room is closed and no one would come to bring or take away linen on such a day."

The sound of muskets was heard on the stones. Some one struck, at the same time, on the alley door.

Voices were raised confusedly.

"He is safe by this time."

"He is hidden here."

Catharine shuddered.

"They are seeking him," she murmured, looking with the utmost pity upon the unconscious man beside her.

The voices growled two ways—an impatient shuffling of feet gave witness to the anxiety of the crowd.

"Let us force the door," cried an impatient voice.

"How shall I save him?" groaned Catharine, and shaking the dying man, she said: "Come—citizen—sir—courage—try to walk——"

He opened his eyes and said in a stifled voice, "I cannot. Let me die!"

"He's anxious to die," growled Catharine. "See—have a little energy—heavens! Remember, I must render you alive to Mlle. de Laveline—she never sent you here to die—get up—so—that's it—you see it is not hard—only a little will——"

Neipperg staggered like a drunken man. Catharine could hardly support him.

The cries, the threats, the adjurations redoubled without.

Then the blows of the bayonets directed against the door, made it shake.

Then a voice was heard—"Stop, citizens—let me pass—that door will be opened to me."

And the same voice cried loudly: "Catharine, it is I—have no fear—come!"

"Lefebvre," said Catharine, trembling, happy to know that he was safe and sound, but still afraid for her charge.

"Yes; I'm coming," she called.

"You see, citizens—she will open—a little patience—pshaw! you have frightened her by demanding an opening in such fashion," said Lefebvre, proudly, when he saw that Catharine recognized his voice.

"Did you hear?" she said quickly to the wounded man. "They want to come in—I must open to them—come!"

"How far is it?"

"Try to get up these stairs. I will hide you in the garret."

"Oh, I cannot—see, I fall."

"Well, in my bedroom, then."

And Catharine helped him into her room and locked the door.

Then, blushing, breathless, happy, she hastened to open to Lefebvre and the crowd, saying with great glee to herself, "Now he is safe."

CHAPTER V.

CATHARINE'S BED-CHAMBER.

THE bar removed and the bolts drawn, the door opened, giving admittance to Lefebvre, and three or four National Guards, together with a crowd of neighbors and idlers, among whom women and children were in great numbers.

"You were slow in opening to us, my sweet Catharine," said Lefebvre, kissing her on both cheeks.

"Well, such a noise—such yells!"

"Yes, I know, you were frightened; but they were patriots, friends, who knocked. Catharine, we are victors on every side! The tyrant is a prisoner of the nation; the fortress of despotism is taken; the people are masters to-day."

"Long live the nation!" cried several voices.

"Death to traitors!" "To perdition with the Swiss and the Chevaliers du Poignard," cried others in the crowd, which now surged to the very door of Catharine's rooms.

"Yes, death to those who fired upon the people," said Lefebvre in a loud voice. "Catharine, do you know why they came so rudely to your rooms?"

"No—I was afraid—I have heard shots near here."

"We were firing at an aristocrat who escaped from

the Tuileries—one of those Chevaliers du Poignard, who would assassinate patriots. I had sworn that if he fell into my hands I would make his blood atone for ours. Just as my comrades and I pursued him," said Lefebvre, indicating the National Guards with him, "having discharged our guns at him, he vanished at the turn of the street; he is surely wounded; there was blood beside the door of your alley, Catharine, and so we thought he might have taken refuge here."

Lefebvre looked around him, and continued, "But he is not here—we could see him—besides, you can assure us, can you not?"

Then turning to the National Guards, "Comrades, we have nothing more to do here, not you, at least—you see the white uniform is not here—you will permit one of the victors of the Tuileries to embrace his wife in private?"

"Your wife? Oh, not yet, Lefebvre," said Catharine.

"How? Is not the tyrant done for?"

And waving his hand to the guards, "*Au revoir*, citizens, until later, at the section, we must name a captain and two lieutenants, and also a curate for the parish—a patriot curate, surely. The curate grew frightened and ran away, the two lieutenants and the captain were killed by the Swiss, and so we must find others. *Au revoir!*"

The guards moved off.

The crowd still stood round the door.

"Well, friends, did you not hear or understand?" said Lefebvre in a low and pleasant voice. "What are you

waiting for ? For him in white ? He is not here with Catharine ; that is clear. Oh, he must have fallen some distance from here, by the way—he had at least three balls in his breast—look for him—it is your affair ! He is no hunter who gives up his game.”

And Lefebvre sent them from him.

“ Well ! well ! we will go after him, sergeant ! ”

“ It’s easy enough to turn the world upside down,” said another.

And he added in a slow voice, “ Couldn’t somebody be hidden in that room ? ”

Lefebvre quickly closed the door, and opening his arms to embrace Catharine again, said : “ I thought they’d never take themselves off. Did you hear their impudence, they spoke of your bedroom, *your* bedroom, indeed ! What a notion ! But how you tremble, Catharine ! Come, it is over ; be calm ! Let us think of each other.”

He noted Catharine’s eyes turned toward the door of her room.

Instinctively, he went to the door and tried to open it.

It did not yield.

Lefebvre stopped, surprised, uneasy.

A vague suspicion crossed him.

“ Catharine,” he said, “ why is that door closed ? ”

“ Because—I wanted it so,” said Catharine, visibly embarrassed.

“ That is no reason ; give me the key.”

“ No, you shall not have it ! ”

"Catharine," cried Lefebvre white with rage, "you are deceiving me ; there is some one in that room—a lover, doubtless. I want that key."

"And I have said you shall not have it !"

"Well, I will take it."

And Lefebvre put his hand into Catharine's apron-pocket, took the key, went to the door of the chamber, and unlocked it.

"Lefebvre," cried Catharine, "my husband, only, I have told you, may go through that door. Enter it by force now, and you shall never go through it with me !"

Some one knocked, again, at the outer door.

Catharine went to open it.

"Where is Sergeant Lefebvre ?" they asked ; "he is wanted at the section. They talk of making him lieutenant."

Lefebvre, moved, pale and silent, stepped back from Catharine's chamber.

He re-closed the door carefully, took out the key, and returning it to Catharine, said: "You did not tell me that death was in your chamber."

"He is dead ! Ah, poor lad !" said Catharine sadly.

"No—he lives. But tell me true—he came not as a lover ?"

"Beast !" said Catharine. "If he had come so, do you think I would have hidden him there ? But you will not give him up, at least ?" She asked it anxiously. "Though he is an Austrian, he is a friend of Mlle. Blanche de Laveline, my benefactress."

"A wounded man is sacred," said Lefebvre. "That chamber, my sweet Catharine, is become an ambulance, which one never disturbs. Tend the poor devil! Save him! I shall be ready to help you pay your debt to that lady who has been good to you; but keep silent that none may ever know—it might do me harm in my section."

"Ah! brave heart! Thou art as good as brave! Lefebvre, you have my promise. When you are ready, I will be your wife!"

"That will be quickly done; but my friends are getting impatient. I must go with them."

"Sergeant Lefebvre, they are waiting for you, they want to vote!" cried one of the guards.

"Well, I'm coming; start on, comrades."

And while Sergeant Lefebvre went to the section, where the votes were to be cast, Catharine entered her chamber on tip-toe, where, in a light sleep, interrupted by feverish starts, lay the young Austrian officer, who had become to her a sacred charge, since he had invoked the name of Blanche de Laveline.

CHAPTER VI.

LITTLE HENRIOT.

CATHARINE brought some bouillon and a little wine to the sick man. As she did so, she said to him, when he had wakened at the sound of her step:

"Take this ; you must grow stronger. You need all your strength, for you know you cannot stay very long in this room. Of course, it is not I who would send you away ; you are here as a guest of Mademoiselle Blanche ; it is she who sent you to me ; it is she who shelters and protects you. But there are too many outsiders who come to my shop—my fellow-workers, my customers, and others,—and these will not be slow to talk, you may be sure, and that would get both of us into trouble. Why ! you have fired on the people."

Neipperg made a movement and said slowly : " We defended the king."

"The big Veto !" cried Catharine, elevating her shoulders. " He had taken refuge with the Assembly ; he was safe and quiet ; he left you to fight it out, the great egoist, without thinking about you any more than of that red cap he had snatched from his head on the twentieth of June, often having feigned to wear it with a good grace, among our companions of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. He is good for nothing, an idler, your great Veto, whom his jade of a wife pulls round by the nose—do you know whither ? before the guns of the people. That, surely, is where he will go. But," she added, after a short silence, " what on earth were you doing in that engagement, you, a stranger ? For you told me you were an Austrian ?"

"As lieutenant of the noble guards of his majesty I was charged with a mission to the queen," was the reply.

"The Austrian woman," sneered Catharine, "and for her you fought,—you who had nothing to do with our struggles!"

"I wanted to die," said the young man, very simply.

"To die! At your age? for the king? for the queen? There must be a mystery in this, my young man," said Catharine, with good-humored raillery. "Excuse me if I seem indiscreet, but when one is twenty years old, and wants to die, among men one doesn't know, and against whom one has no reason to fight—well—then, one must be in love. Hem! have I guessed it?"

"Yes, my good hostess."

"Gracious! It was not hard to do. And shall I tell you with whom you are in love? With Mademoiselle Blanche de Laveline. Oh, I do not ask your confidences," Catharine added quickly, noticing an uneasiness in the pale face of the wounded man. "It is none of my business; yet I know Mademoiselle de Laveline is very lovable."

The Count de Neipperg raised himself a little and exclaimed with fervor:

"Yes, she is good and beautiful, my darling Blanche. Oh! madame, if death comes for me, tell her that with my last sigh I breathed her name; tell her that my last thought, ere life departed, was for her and for——"

The young man stopped, keeping a confession from rising to his lips.

"You are not going to die," rejoined Catharine, anxious to comfort him. "Who dies at your years

when he is in love? You must live, man, for Mademoiselle Blanche, whom you love, and who surely loves you, and for that other person you were going to name—her father, doubtless, M. de Laveline? A very fine gentleman. I have seen him several times, the Marquis of Laveline, down in Alsace. He wore a blue velvet with gold embroidery, and he had a jewelled snuff-box that sparkled.

Neipperg, when he heard the name of the Marquis of Laveline, permitted a gesture of contempt and anger to escape him.

"It seems," said Catharine to herself, "that they are not great friends. It is well to know this, I shall not speak to him on that subject again—probably Blanche's father is opposed to the match. Poor girl! That was why the young man wanted to die."

And, with a sigh of pity, she began to arrange the poor fellow's pillow, saying to him: "I have been talking too much—it annoys you perhaps. Won't you try to sleep a little, sir? It will lessen the fever."

The sick man gently turned his head.

"Talk to me of Blanche," he urged. "Speak of her again; that will cure me."

Catharine smiled, and sat down to tell him how, born on a little farm not far from the castle of the seigneurs of Laveline, she had watched Mademoiselle Blanche grow up. Reared by her mother, whom the marquis left alone most of the time, being an attendant at court, Blanche had grown up in the country, running through the woodland, hunting and riding alike

over field and fell, never minding the bars that had to be leaped, nor the gates to be passed. She was never haughty, and talked pleasantly with the country folks. She had come frequently to the farm and had grown fond of the little Catharine.

One day the marquis had called his wife and daughter to Versailles. Catharine and three other young girls had been taken from the country to wait upon Madame and Mademoiselle de Laveline. Catherine had spent several happy years, then Madame de Laveline had died ; and it was then that Mademoiselle Blanche, who had accompanied her father on a diplomatic mission to England, had, before going to London, been so good as to set Catharine up in business, buying her the laundry of Mlle. Loblegeois, where she was still to be found. Ah ! she was a creature who ought to be beloved and blessed, was Mademoiselle Blanche.

As Catharine closed the story of her modest existence, and told of the good deeds of the daughter of the Marquis de Laveline, some one knocked at the door.

Could it be Lefebvre who was returning with his comrades from the section ? Catharine thought uneasily. " Rest quietly and make no noise," she adjured Neipperg, who pricked up his ears. " If Lefebvre is alone, there is no danger ; but if his comrades are with him, I will speak to them and send them away. Do as I bid you and fear nothing."

Catharine hurried to open the door, resolutely, though somewhat excited. Her surprise was great when she saw a young woman, who cast herself, trembling, into

the room, saying, "He is here, is he not? They said they saw a man drag himself to the gate. Is he still alive?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle Blanche," said Catharine, recognizing in the frightened woman Mlle. de Laveline, "he is here—in my chamber—he lives and speaks only of you—come and see him."

"Oh, my good Catharine, what a happy inspiration led me to send him to you for a sure refuge, when he left to fight with the gentlemen of the palace!" And Mademoiselle de Laveline took Catharine's hands in hers, and pressed them in gratitude, saying, "Take me to him."

The sight of Blanche produced a startling effect on the wounded man. He wanted to leap from the bed on which Catharine had had so much difficulty in helping him to stretch himself. But the two women made him stay there, almost by main force.

"Naughty boy," said Blanche, in her gentle voice; "you tried to let them kill you."

"Life without you was a burden; could I have found a nobler way to leave it than in the fight, sword in hand, smiling upon death who came to me so gloriously?"

"Ungrateful! you should have lived for me!"

"For you? Were you not already dead to me? Were you not about to leave me forever?"

"That odious marriage was not yet concluded—a chance might have helped us. Hope was not dead."

"You told me, yourself," said Neipperg, "that there was but one hope. To-day, the tenth of August, you were to have become the wife of another, and be called Madame de Lowendaal. Your father had decided so, and you could not resist."

"You know that my tears and prayers proved useless. Afraid of being ruined by the Baron de Lowendaal, the Belgian millionaire, who had loaned him large sums of money, and insisted on immediate payment, or, in default, my hand, my father consented to give him what he desired most of all."

"And that which cost your father least. The marquis would pay his debt with his child."

"Hush, dear, my father did not know how great our love was—he knew nothing—he does not know now," said Blanche, with increasing energy.

Catharine, during this conversation between the lovers, had turned aside. She had passed discreetly into the outer room at the moment when Neipperg, with mournful vehemence, looked at Blanche and answered, "Yes, they are ignorant of everything. When I went away, I grew desperate. My death would have but rendered the silence more complete, the ignorance more profound; yet the balls of the 'sans-culottes' did not kill me. I have to try again. Well, occasions to die will not be lacking in the years which are coming. War is declared. I will go and search in the ranks of the imperial army, on the banks of the Rhine, the death which was denied me in the fall of the Tuileries."

"You shall not do that," was the maiden's reply.

“Who shall keep me from it?” Neipperg rejoined. “But forgive me, Blanche! This is the tenth of August, the day set for your marriage. How does it happen that you are here? Your place is beside your husband. They wait for you at church. Why are you not ready to make the Baron de Lowendaal happy and to cancel the debts of the marquis? The fight, doubtless, interrupted the ceremony; but the shooting has ceased, the tocsin is silent, and they can now ring the wedding-bells. Let me die. Here or elsewhere, to-day or to-morrow, what does it matter?”

“No! no! You must live—for me—for our child!” cried Blanche, throwing herself upon Neipperg, and embracing him passionately.

“Our child,” murmured the sick man.

“Yes, our dear little Henriot! You have no right to die! Your life is not your own.”

“Our child,” said Neipperg, sadly; “but—but—your marriage?”

“It has not yet come off; there is hope still.”

“Really! You are not yet Madame de Lowendaal?”

“Not yet! Never, perhaps.”

“How? Tell me.”

And a feverish anxiety convulsed the face of the sufferer, while Blanche resumed: “When you had gone, after bidding me a farewell which we both thought was to be forever, for you had told me that you were going to join the defenders of the palace, I had one little hope in my heart. I indicated to you the

house of good Catharine as a safe refuge, if you should happen to escape from the Tuileries. I hoped to be able to join you there."

"You hoped for that? Even while consenting to obey your father? Why, you had decided to become the wife of Lowendaal."

"Yes, but something told me that that wedding would never take place."

"And it is come to pass!"

"The insurrection resounded in the suburbs. My father declared that it would be impossible to celebrate the marriage on the day appointed, so the Baron de Lowendaal proposed to postpone the ceremony for three months."

"Three months!"

"Yes, the sixth of November; that is the date he has set."

"Ah! M. le Baron is not in a hurry."

"Frightened by the turn of events, doubtful as to the progress of the Revolution, M. de Lowendaal left Paris last night, before the closing of the gates. He has returned to his own country. He has named his palace, near Jemmapes, on the Belgian frontier, as the place where we are to celebrate that impossible marriage."

"And you are to go to Jemmapes?"

"My father, somewhat frightened, has decided to go to the baron's castle. We are to go soon, if the roads are open!"

"And you are going with him?"

"I shall go with him; oh, rest assured, I know what I have vowed. I shall never be the baron's bride."

"You swear it to me?"

"I swear it!"

"But who will give you the power to resist at Jemmapes, when you yielded here?"

"Before his departure, the baron received a letter which I wrote to him—with, oh, such tears! His servant, whom I bribed, will not have given it to him till he is over the border——"

"And he knows?"

"The truth! He knows that I love you, and that our little Henriot can have none other than you to call father."

"Oh, my darling Blanche! My beloved wife whom I adore! Ah, you give me back my life! It seems I have almost power to rise and begin again the combat with the 'sans-culottes.'"

And Neipperg, in his wild excitement, made so sudden a movement that the bandages which covered his wound slipped, the gash re-opened, and a stream of blood flowed.

He uttered a cry.

Catharine ran in and offered her help.

The two women did their best to re-adjust the bandages, and closed the wound again.

Neipperg had fainted.

He came to slowly.

His first disconnected words told the secret.

"Blanche—I am dying—watch over our child," he whispered.

Catharine heard this revelation, as if it had been a blow.

"Mademoiselle Blanche has a child," she said to herself; then turning to the young woman who stood, with eyes cast down, she said quickly, "Fear nothing; what I happen to hear went in at one ear and out at the other. If you should ever need me, you know that Catharine is always ready to serve you. Is the child big? I am sure he is sweet!"

"He is nearly three years old."

"And his name is?"

"Henri—we call him Henriot."

"It is a pretty name. Could I see him, mademoiselle?"

Blanche de Laveline reflected.

"Listen, dear Catharine, you can do me a great service,—finish what you have begun so well, by rescuing and saving M. de Neipperg."

"Speak—what shall I do?"

"My boy is with a good woman in the neighborhood of Paris—Mère Hoche, in a suburb of Versailles."

"Mère Hoche, I know her! Her son is a friend of Lefebvre—Lefebvre is my lover, almost my husband; you see. I too shall marry and have a little Henri,—more than one perhaps."

"I wish you joy! You will go and see Mother Hoche."

"I have a message for her from her son Lezare, who was in the French Guards with Lefebvre. It was

Lefebvre who took him to enroll. They were together at the taking of the Bastille."

"What shall I say to the Citizeness Hoche?"

"Give her this money and this letter," said Blanche, handing Catharine a purse and a paper, "and then you are to take the child and carry him off. Is it too much, Catharine?"

"Is that all? You know only too well that should you ask me to go, alone, and re-take the Tuileries, though the Swiss had returned to it, I would attempt it for you. Too much! Ah, you are cruel! Was it not your kindness that enabled me to buy this place, to establish my business here, and to become, by and by, Mme. Lefebvre? Think! have you not some further command for me. When I have taken the little one from Versailles, what am I to do with him?"

"Bring him to me."

"Where?"

"At the Palace de Lowendaal near a village called Jemmapes. It is in Belgium, on the border. Can you get there readily?"

"For you I will try anything! When must I be at Jemmapes with the boy?"

"At the latest by the sixth of November."

"Well, I shall be there! Lefebvre will manage, I am sure, to let me go. Before that we shall have been married, and who knows but he may go with me. The fighting may be over then."

"Embrace me, Catharine! Some day, I trust to be able to acknowledge all you are doing for me."

"Your reward came beforehand. Count on me."

"At Jemmapes, then——"

"At Jemmapes, on the sixth of November," repeated Blanche de Laveline, and looking at Neipperg, she said, "He is sleeping; I shall watch beside him. Go to your duties, Catharine; you must find us in the way greatly."

"I have told you you are at home here; but see, he awakes," she said, looking at Neipperg, who slowly opened his eyes; "you must have a great many things to tell each other. I shall leave you."

"You are not going away? You will not leave me alone?"

"Oh, I shall not be away long. I must take some clothes to a customer at a little distance. I will return at once. Open to no one. Good-bye."

CHAPTER VII.

THE TENANT OF THE HOTEL DE METZ.

WHILE the Count de Neipperg and Blanche de Laveline, in delicious *tête-à-tête*, were discussing their projects for the future and talking of their child, Catharine had taken a basket full of clothes on her arm and made herself ready to go out.

She wanted to use her time profitably. The lovers were busy, they would not notice her absence; and, besides, all the morning had been a loss to the laun-

dress. True, not every day was the Tuileries taken, but nevertheless she had to make up for lost time. Moreover, she reflected on the various things that had come to pass.

She had become a keeper of secrets.

Neipperg had quite approved the confidence of Blanche which gave the charge of little Henriot to her instead of Mère Hoche, in whose hands he was at Versailles. She was to take him to Jemmapes.

When he was recovered, Neipperg would go to the mother of his child, braving the anger of the Marquis of Laveline, ready to beard the Baron of Lowendaal in his own hall and to dispute his right to Blanche, sword in hand, if need be.

Thus Catharine, pursuing her way, communed with herself.

"Lefebvre is at the section where they are voting. He cannot return before the election of the new officers is announced. That will occupy at least two hours. They take such a long time to vote at the section of the Filles-Saint-Thomas. All good angels guard my Lefebvre! I shall have time to run to Captain Bonaparte's."

And thinking of her client, the lean, pale artillery officer, she smiled.

"He's one who hasn't any surplus shirts," she said. "Poor captain, he'll miss that one."

And with a sigh she added, "When I am Citizeness Lefebvre I don't want to owe anything to Captain Bonaparte. It is enough that he owes me something."

I'll present him his bill. If he should ask me for it I can give it to him. Anyway, at the worst extremity, I don't expect to get all he owes me, ever. Poor boy, he is such a hard worker—such a scholar—always reading and writing—he has a sad youth ; but one cannot have time for everything," she said, with a sarcastic smile and a somewhat disparaging shrug as she felt in her pocket for Captain Bonaparte's laundry bill.

She got to the Hôtel de Metz, kept by Maureard, where the humble artillery officer lived.

He occupied a modest room on the third story, number 14.

The youth of this man, at once so great and so unfortunate, who made the century ring with his name and his glory, whose aureole of blood still ensanguines our horizon, passed without extraordinary events or supernatural revelations.

It was only afterwards that people tried to discover that there had been special prophecies, revealing his genius, predicting his mighty career.

Bonaparte, as child and young man, deceived all the world. No one could tell his fortune, none could foresee his greatness.

His early years were those of a poor, shy, hard-working-student, proud and somewhat quiet. He suffered cruelly the pangs of ill-fortune. Poverty isolated him. His intense family feeling and clanishness made the precarious condition of those who belonged to him doubly hard to bear.

His father, Charles Bonaparte, or more precisely,

de Buonaparte, the son of an ancient family of the Tuscan nobility, established at Ajaccio for over two centuries, was, by profession, a lawyer. All his ancestors had been gownmen. Charles Bonaparte was one of the most ardent partisans of Paoli, the Corsican patriot. He had submitted to French authority when Paoli left the island.

Though a member of the Corsican Council of Administration and highly respected, Charles Bonaparte's means were small. He owned, all his resource, but one plantation of vines and olives, which brought scarce twelve hundred livres as rental. It was not worth even that in his hands.

Later, after the troubles in Corsica, even this income was gone, and he saw ruin before him.

He had married Letizia Ramolini (born on the twenty-fourth of August, 1749), a young girl with beautiful features and a profile like an antique cameo, who afterwards developed a singularly acute gift of foresight combined with much firmness and tact.

When, with the title of "Madame Mère," she sat enthroned among her sons, the rulers of Europe, had she not said to Napoleon, who reproached her for not spending all her allowance, "I am economizing for you, my children, who may some day be in want."

According to accepted tradition, Napoleon Bonaparte, son of Charles and Letizia, was born August 15, 1769.

He was the second son of the Bonapartes by this calculation. Another more plausible story says that Joseph was the younger son. That he was born at Ajaccio.

Napoleon, born on January 7, 1768, had, according to this, been born in Corsica.

The certificate of birth, existing at the military school, and produced for the admission of young Napoleon, bears, plainly, the date August 15, 1769; but other papers quite justify the confusion which exists: principally the marriage certificate of Napoleon and Josephine. It has been said that Josephine had coquettishly wanted to make herself younger than she really was, but that Napoleon, to lessen the distance between their ages, had grown two years older. He had probably been sufficiently gallant to give his actual age, and then, the motives which had induced his parents to substitute one certificate for another were past. They made him younger on account of the conditions for admission to the military school at Brienne.

The elder son had passed the age of ten years. His parents, in giving as his the birth-certificate of Joseph, two years his junior and whose tastes were not at all military, had thus made possible the entrance of the future general.

Two circumstances largely influenced the formation of his character and the bent of his thought: the perturbations of his native land and the distresses of his family.

Civil war in his home, and poverty at the paternal fireside, alike hardened his soul and embittered his youth.

He had been serious when he entered the school at Brienne: he came out sad, and heart-sore.

His comrades had made fun of his Italian accent, of his odd name of Napoleon—they called him “Paille-au-Nez.” They had insulted his poverty; and we know how bitter are these boyish taunts, and what cruel wounds they leave in their victims.

A good scholar, particularly in mathematics, playing little except in the winter, when, a precocious strategist he conducted the boyish assaults, when snowballs were hurled at the ice-fortress, in the courtyard of the school at Brienne, he lived almost unnoticed those first years of his life.

Here he learned to know Bourrienne the future miser, his private secretary, who repaid the benefits and indulgence of his friend by calumniating and traducing him in memoirs paid for by the people of the Restoration.

From Brienne, he went to the Military School, and there, again, he suffered in small ways, daily bearing those pin-pricks which do not kill, but whose misery young men know who are poor and do not complain.

He had no money, and not being able to join in the expensive pleasures of the sons of wealthy families, he kept himself aloof.

This isolation, at an age when the heart is ready to expand, helped to render inscrutable and pitiless him who was destined to become the man of bronze.

He had lost his father, who died of a cancer in the stomach, at the age of thirty-nine years, just after his son (Napoleon) had been named, on September 1, 1785, second lieutenant in the company of bombardiers of

the regiment of "la Fère," in garrison at Valencia. He occupied his leisure in the camp by writing a history of Corsica; and, going into society, he took dancing lessons of Professor Dantel, and paid his court to the ladies assembled at the parlor of a friend.

His regiment was sent on to Lyons, then to Douai. He obtained a leave of absence which enabled him to see his family at Ajaccio, and after a trip to Paris, where he lived at the Hôtel de Cherbourg, in the Rue du Four-Saint-Honoré, he was ordered to rejoin his regiment at Auxonne, on May 1, 1788.

Work and privation—for he lived on milk, having no money—made him ill.

To comfort his mother, a widow with eight children, Napoleon took with him his young brother, Louis.

He lived with the boy, spending at this time but ninety-two francs, fifteen centimes a month!

Two tiny rooms, without fire or furnishings, composed their home. In one fitted up with a cot, a trunk full of manuscripts, a chair stuffed with straw and a white-wood table, slept and worked the future master of the Tuileries and of Saint-Cloud. The future King of Holland lay in the other room, on a mattress thrown upon the floor.

Naturally, they had no servant. Bonaparte brushed the coats, polished the boots, and cooked the soup.

Napoleon once alluded to this period of his life to a functionary, who complained that his pay was insufficient.

"I knew such times, monsieur, when I had the

honor to be a second lieutenant ; I breakfasted on dry bread but I closed the door upon my poverty. I never spoke of it to my comrades."

Poverty keeps a man pure, and seldom gives time for love-affairs.

At that time Napoleon behaved, perhaps, like the fox with the grapes he could not get, for he launched this anathema against women, "I believe love to be the bane of society, of personal happiness for men ; and I believe that love does more harm than good."

The good Catharine, who, besides washing her client's linen, had experienced a leaning toward him, before she met Lefebvre, was not slow in seeing that Bonaparte practised always his severe philosophy of Auxonne.

Raised to a first lieutenancy of the Fourth Artillery, Bonaparte had returned to Valencia, in company with his brother Louis. He had taken up again his life as a studious, quiet, almost cynical officer. It was the dawn of the Revolution. He showed himself a warm partisan of the ideas of liberty and the emancipation of the people. Then he became known as a revolutionist. He spoke, he wrote, he became an agitator : he had himself made a member of the club " Les Amis de la Constitution," whose secretary he became. He certainly had much faith. Nor was he lacking in aptitude. Indeed, this extraordinary man could take on any tone with seeming truthfulness, and wear any mask, as if it were his natural face.

In October, 1791, he asked leave of absence to im-

prove his health and visit his family. He went to Corsica.

There, in the bosom of his family, making them his partisans, he asked to be made head of a battalion of National Guards at Ajaccio. This command was assigned to him by public force—the only authority. He was, however, hotly opposed.

His chief rival was named Marius Peraldi, a member of a very influential family.

Bonaparte set to work feverishly to get recruits. Ajaccio was divided into two camps.

The Commissaries of the "Constituante," sent by the central power, were able to enlist, by their presence, a great number of votes, and made the scale turn.

Their chief, Muratori, had settled with Marius Peraldi.

That was done to show that the rival of Bonaparte was agreeable to the authorities.

It is well known how great is the weight of official approval in Corsica.

Bonaparte's friends, unable to bring any such force to bear, believed the success of Peraldi sure.

But the ardent and tenacious man himself did not give up.

He assembled some trusty friends, and at supper-time, when the Peraldi faction were at table, their dining-room was entered by an armed force.

They aimed at the guests, and between two armed men, Muratori, summoned to arise and go, was conducted to the Bonaparte house.

The commissioner was more dead than alive.

Bonaparte went to meet him smilingly, ignoring the means he had taken to bring his visitor, and extending his hand, said, "You are very welcome to my house. I knew, had you been free, you would not be at the Peraldi's; be seated at our hearth, my dear commissioner."

As his guides, with their guns, were still at the door, ready to obey Bonaparte's orders, Muratori sat down, braced himself against his luck, and spoke no word of returning to the Peraldi house.

On the morrow Bonaparte was elected commander of the National Guards of Ajaccio.

The man of Brumaire was nascent in the candidate for the militia. And the deed of force enacted at Ajaccio foretold that of Saint-Cloud.

The situation of Bonaparte, accepting a territorial command, when he had a place in the army in action, was not exactly regular. But it was a revolutionary period.

It is certain that, had times been different, this infraction would have cost him dear.

He had his furlough prolonged, so that at its end his term of service expired.

The motive which made him remain at the head of the Corsican militia when he had the position of lieutenant-colonel, was neither ambition nor political fervor.

His military genius could have no field in his miserable little island.

It was money, always a question of money, which at

the time governed the conduct of this adventurous youth.

His pay in the National Guards was 162 livres, twice the sum he received as lieutenant in the artillery.

With this sum he would be enabled to supply the many wants of his large family and educate his brother Louis properly.

Here, then, was his motive for staying at Corsica. Bonaparte was always more or less the victim of his family.

We are told, that, in taking command of the battalion at Ajaccio, he had not deserted, as has been said. The National Guard was at that time, even in Corsica, in active service. It was part of the army. Bonaparte, to justify himself, argued, besides, that by authority of the camp-marshal of Rossi, who had looked into the regularity of the proceeding, he had conformed to the decree of the Assembly of December 17, 1791, which authorized officers of the active army to serve in the ranks of the National Guard.

Deposed by Colonel Maillard, Bonaparte went to Paris to justify his conduct and to plead his cause before the minister of war.

He hoped to be re-instated. But while awaiting the decision he lived in Paris alone, yet ever busy.

He fared badly at his home, and dined, frequently, with M. and Madame Permon, whom he had known at Valencia, and whose daughter was destined to marry Junot and become Duchess of Abrantes. Later, Bonaparte, thought of asking, himself, the hand of Madame

Permon, who had been left a widow with considerable wealth.

In spite of his economy, he had, at this time, some debts.

He owed fifteen francs to his host, and, as we have seen, forty-five francs to his laundress, Catharine Sans-Gêne.

His friends were few. He lived in close intimacy with Junot, Marmont, and Bourrienne.

All three, like himself, were penniless, but rich in hopes.

On the morning of August 10th Bonaparte had risen at the sound of the tocsin, and, simply as a spectator of the fray, had gone to Fauvelet de Bourrienne, the elder brother of his friend, who kept a bric-a-brac shop and loan office at the Place du Carrousel. He needed money, and did not want to be quite penniless on a day of revolution ; so he took his watch as a pawn to Fauvelet, who loaned him fifteen francs on it.

From the shop of the money-lender, whence it would have been difficult to escape, the battle having begun, Bonaparte could follow all the movements of the fight.

At noon, when the people's victory was assured, he regained his lodgings.

He went pensively homeward, saddened by the sight of the corpses, sickened by the smell of blood.

Many years after, the great butcher of Europe, forgetting the terrible outpouring of his people's blood, and the mountains of corpses accumulated beneath his conquering feet, remembered again this horrible sight.

On the rocks of St. Helena he expressed at once, his indignation and his emotion at the memory of the innumerable victims of the Swiss and the Chevaliers du Poignard, and the sights he witnessed when he was returning to his hotel, on that bloody morning of the tenth of August.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HANDSOME SERGEANT.

SUCH, then, was the man, as yet unknown, obscure, mysterious, whom Catharine Sans-Gêne went to find in his little room in a furnished house, where he waited impatiently for fortune, the capricious and tardy goddess who had not yet decided to knock at his door.

Everything seemed against him. Nothing went right. Ill-luck pursued him.

On his return to his hotel, on that bloody morning of the tenth of August, he had sought, in work, rest for his mind, distraction from his cares, and forgetfulness of that tragic spectacle which he had witnessed from the pawnbroker's shop.

He had unfolded a geographical chart, and had set himself to study carefully the region of the south, the border towns of the Mediterranean, Marseilles, and, above all, the port of Toulon, where the royalist reaction was going on, and which an English fleet menaced.

From time to time he pushed the map away, buried his head in his hands, and dreamed.

His ardent thought excited him. Like a traveller in the dark, he saw, rising before him, visions and prodigious mirages.

Vanquished cities, where he entered as conqueror, mounted on a white horse, amid the enthusiasm of crowds, and the acclamation of soldiers. A bridge, where shots rang out, and which he crossed, colors in hand ; cheering his forces ; driving back the enemy. Strange horsemen, in gold-embroidered coats, who brandished cimeters aloft, around him, invulnerable, and who, at length stopped, threw down their arms, and bowed their turbaned heads before his tent. Then, the triumphal marches, among hordes of vanquished soldiers, in strange lands, afar and ever-changing. The intense southern sun burning on his head, the northern snows dusted over his cloak—then feasts, defiles, processions,—kings subdued, prostrated; queens flinging themselves at his feet,—the intoxication of glory—the apotheosis of triumph !

All this fantastic dream was reared but to vanish again, when he lifted his burning face from his hands.

Opening his eyes, the plain and ridiculous reality of his room at the hotel was apparent.

A little smile showed itself on his lips, and his practical common sense coming to the top, he chased the deceptive phantom away. Ceasing to see the mirage, he looked with clear eyes at that which was before him, and examined with cold reasoning into the uncertain situation, the dreadful present, the probably worse future.

His position was deplorable, and no change seemed probable.

No money. No work. The minister deaf to his entreaties. The courts hostile. No friend. No protector.

He saw himself threatened with an unavoidable ill : black want and weakness.

His ambitious projects were dissipated in the brutal wind of actual life—his hope for the future fell like castles of cards.

He began to feel the cold shudder of his disillusion.

What should he do ? For a moment he thought of passing into a street in the quarter of "Nouvelle-France," then in construction, of hiring some houses and letting out furnished rooms.

He dreamed, too, of leaving France and taking service in the Turkish army.

Then he said to himself that he had something in his brain ; and he felt the impetuous blood coursing through his veins, like the swift tide of the Rhine.

Then he turned again to his task, applying himself to a topographical study of the basin of the Mediterranean, his birthplace, where the cannon was soon to thunder.

Oh, that he might be there, where they were fighting, where they were going to defend the nation, and lead his artillery against the English !

That dream was possible ! If he lived a dreamer's life, it was because the hard-working Corsican was as yet alone in the world, without influence, without any one who believed in him.

Again, to overcome the discouragement which began to creep to his heart—a subtle poison and a deadly one which can freeze the most indomitable energy—he returned to the study of his chart, and took up the thread of his work, interrupted by his dream.

At this moment there came two light taps on his door.

He trembled. A sharp pain shot to his heart. The bravest men, when penniless, are easily frightened by a sudden knock. They wait, with head erect, and eye serene, for Death to strike them. But they are weak and trembling at the thought of a creditor who may come, bill in hand.

There came a second, somewhat louder, knock.

“Perhaps it is old Maureard coming up with his bill,” thought Bonaparte, blushing.

“Come in,” he said slowly.

A moment passed.

And then he repeated impatiently, “Well, come!”

He thought in surprise, “That is not the landlord. Junot or Bourrienne would not wait before entering; who can have come here to-day?” He was less uneasy, and more anxious, for he never had any visitors.

He lifted his head, inquisitively, to see who might enter.

The door opened, the key having been left in the lock, and a young man advanced, wearing the uniform of a foot-soldier.

A gentle youth, fresh, rosy and delicate, still too young for a beard, with dark, intense eyes.

On his sleeve he wore the stripes of a sergeant, evidently just acquired.

"What do you want of me?" asked Bonaparte.

"You have probably made a mistake."

The young sergeant gave a military salute.

"I have the honor to address Captain Bonaparte, of the artillery, have I not?" he said, in a soft voice.

"The same—what business brings you?"

"I am called René," said the young soldier, with a slight hesitation.

"René—so short?" said Bonaparte, fixing his piercing glance on the stranger, a glance which penetrated to the very soul.

"Yes, René," repeated the visitor, with a little more assurance, "in the regiment of volunteers from Mayenne-et-Loire, where I am serving; they call me 'The Handsome Sergeant.'"

"You deserve that name," rejoined Bonaparte smiling, "though you have rather too gentle and foppish a manner for a soldier.

"You must judge me under fire, my dear captain," said the gay volunteer, proudly.

Bonaparte made a grimace, as if it had touched his sore spot. He growled, "Under fire! Will any one ever see me there?"

Then he answered, looking carefully at his unnoticed visitor, "Come to the point. What do you want with me? What can I do for you?"

"This, Captain, is the object of my visit; my regiment, under M. de Beaurepaire——"

"A brave man ! An energetic soldier ! I know and value him," interrupted Bonaparte. "Where is your regiment now ?" He asked it with marked interest, without ceasing to observe narrowly the sergeant, who seemed so young and evidently so timid.

"At Paris. Oh, for a few days only ; we came on our way from Angers, and we have asked to be the first men honored with orders for the frontier. We are to go to the help of Verdun."

"That is well ! Ah, you are fortunate to be able to go into battle," said Bonaparte, with a sigh ; and he added, "But, you want what of me ?"

"Captain, I have a brother Marcel."

"Your brother's name is Marcel ?" Bonaparte asked, in a defiant tone.

"Marcel René," the handsome sergeant hastened to say, somewhat abashed, and lowering his eyes under the severe and inquisitorial glance of the artillery captain. "My brother is a doctor, he is detailed as aide, in the Fourth Artillery regiment at Valencia."

"My regiment—my late regiment, rather."

"Yes, Captain, that is why I hoped, having heard that you were to be found in Paris. I learned that from one of the National Guards whom I met this morning, at the fight of the Tuileries, Sergeant Lefebvre who knows you."

"Valiant Lefebvre ! Yes, I know him, too ; what did Lefebvre tell you ?"

"That you might, perhaps—by word to the commander—by your protection—get my brother exchanged."

Bonaparte thought deeply, without taking his eyes from the handsome sergeant, who grew more and more troubled.

Embarrassed, anxious to prefer his request as quickly as possible, for it seemed to excite him strangely, the volunteer continued, hurrying on his words : " I would that my brother might be sent from the artillery regiment, which is at Valencia, to the Army of the North. He would be with me—I should see him—we could meet—we could be together—if he should be wounded, I would be there—I might even tend and save him. Oh ! Captain, help us both to that great blessing ! If we can be together, we will bless you, will be ever mindful of your kindness."

And, finishing his speech, the young man's voice was husky, one would have thought, with suppressed sobs.

Bonaparte had risen.

He went straight to the sergeant and said to him in his jerky way, " To begin with, my boy, I can do nothing for you, nor for him you call your brother. Lefebvre should have told you that ; I am without employment, without commission. They have broken my sword. My recommendation to the Fourth Artillery would be useless—worse than nothing. I know no one in Paris. I live alone. I am myself looking for help. I however know the brother of an influential man, an old deputy, called Maximilian Robespierre ; he lives in the Rue Saint-Honoré, very near here. You can go and find him for me ; perhaps he can get for you what would be refused to me ; go and see young Robespierre ! "

"Oh, thanks, Captain, may I some day be able to prove my gratitude!"

Bonaparte raised his finger, half smiling, half serious, and said slowly: "It seems to me, my pretty Sergeant, that you have changed the usual dress of your sex to enter the army and follow the fortunes of war."

The pretty sergeant answered tremblingly: "Ah, pardon, Captain, do not betray me; be generous; respect my disguise; do not kill me in divulging my deceit. Yes, I am a woman!"

"I suspected it at once," said Bonaparte, good-humoredly. "But your comrades, your chiefs, do they see nothing?"

"There are many young men in the regiment. Not one has a beard, and besides, Captain, I do my duty seriously!" said the young warrior proudly.

"I do not doubt it. You went voluntarily. And you wish to be joined in the Army of the North, if I understand your wish, by this doctor—this aide, called Marcel—who is, surely, more to you than a brother, for whom, no doubt, you enlisted. Oh, I do not ask your history! Keep your secret! You have interested me, and if I can serve you, count on me. Go and see young Robespierre. Tell him his friend, Bonaparte, sent you."

And he extended his hand to the pretty sergeant, who took it with transports of joy.

The captain saw Renée go out radiant.

His face clouded a moment, he sighed enviously.

"They love each other, and they want to fight side by side for their country. They are fortunate."

And the melancholy look came over his face again.

He sat down at the table, passed his hand over the chart, and pensively considered at length the city of Toulon, the great maritime port of the south, saying excitedly : "Oh, if I could fight the English ! for I shall fight them—there ! there !"

And his feverish finger pointed, on the map spread before him, to a place unknown, visible for him alone, where he destroyed, in thought, the English fleet.

CHAPTER IX.

THE OATH UNDER THE POPLARS.

THE Count de Surgères, whose château, near Laval, reflected its crumbling old turrets in the Mayenne, had, at the first mutterings of the Revolution, sought shelter beyond the Rhine.

He had encamped at Trèves, near Coblenz, resolved to watch the course of events as a quiet spectator.

Nominally, he had taken service in the army of the princes ; but, exempt on account of his years and his evident infirmities, though he had just passed his fiftieth year, the Count de Surgères was chiefly devoted to high living and to watching events quietly, under the protection of the royal and imperial armies, in the little Rhenish town.

The step he had taken in leaving home was due not from fear of the patriots, nor for love of the princes.

The count, left a childless widower after a few short years of marriage, had for a long time past had a liaison in secret with the wife of a neighboring gentleman, an ardent royalist, who talked, after the night of the 4th of August, about taking arms, having the tocsin sounded, and calling upon the country folk to defend the church and the *fleur-de-lys*.

M. de Surgères, in consideration of his intimacy with his neighbor, had no recourse left him but to follow his lead. Yet his chivalrous tasks were peaceful ones, limited to paying court to the ladies ; he left for lovers of brutal sports the honors of war.

Besides, he began to grow weary of his slavery to love. The lady of his thoughts had not only grown heavier with age ; of yore so trim, so elegant, so tender, so poetically sylph-like, she was now robust and massively square, with a formidably large figure, and she lay heavily on his soul. Of all ponderous bodies, the very heaviest is a woman one has ceased to love.

Thus thought the Count de Surgères, a man of wit, a votary of pleasure ; but hating reproaches, tears, jealousy, and threats. Of independent, somewhat philosophical nature, he had, while a youth at Paris, been among the Encyclopædists, and this independence lent itself ill to subjection. The fetters of the adulterer seemed to him insupportable.

If he had been patient and kept, with the Marquis de Louvigné, the tiresome attitude of a titled lover, it was

because he grew very tired of his own domain, and was too poor to live at court, and because the marquise was the only woman he could make love to in any of the neighboring chateaux.

To find a rival for her he would have had to put himself out to look for a gentle chatelaine in some distant manor or to lower himself to the town's folk and find a lady in the town. M. de Surgères wisely contented himself with the good fortune which he found in taking up arms.

But events were coming, and it was partly the heroic attempts of the marquis, who absolutely wanted to force him into the woods, to make war on the hedges, and partly the desire of the marquis to follow the example of the Duchesses of Longueville, in that possibly terrible game, in riding along the highways, a white cockade in her hat, and pistols in her belt, that finally decided the count to take the way of the emigrant.

That resolution had a double advantage in leaving no doubt of her sentiment of fidelity to the king, and at the same time delivering him from his fleshy Amazon and from the gentleman who was over-fond of ambuscades in the woods.

He was alone, and comparatively free. He announced his departure, one fine morning, and hurried off, pretending that he had received a pressing message from the Count de Provence, asking him to join him afar, in great haste.

In his fear that the marquis should renounce his sylvan warfare, and above all that the marquis would

desire to gallop across the plains with him, the count added maliciously that the Count of Provence had sent his approval of the faithful Louvigné, for his zeal for loyalty to the crown, and the provinces of the West.

Charmed with this mark of royal confidence the marquis sped his friend onward.

The marquise wept a little, but, quite consoled at the idea of going to war, of wearing a hat and white cockade, and of having a gun on the saddle of the mighty charger who should bear her, she smiled through her tears when the Count de Surgères, making his adieux, in her husband's presence, asked permission to kiss her.

When he bent his lips to kiss her, though somewhat kept back by the mountain of flesh that surrounded her. Surgères found time to say in her ear this sentence.

"Take care of Renée. I shall go and bid her goodbye."

The marquise made an affirmative motion with her head, indicating that she had heard and would remember his injunction.

The count, light, joyous and free, made a last sign from his seat on horseback to his friend the marquis, who was quite taken up with plans in which he went out with his farmers, waiting for stray soldiers of the Republic, or going out in small troops. Then the count rode to a turn in the Tougères road, opposite a white house, dainty and decked with vines, which was called "La Garderie."

There, in days gone by, had been a meeting-place for hunters, a post for the guards of the Lords of Mayenne.

The count checked his horse beside the fence enclosing the court, in the centre of which stood the little house.

He sprang to the ground, frightening and chasing the chickens scratching in the grass, and the ducks swimming in the middle of a pond which was half covered with greenish slime.

A dog barked.

"Peace ! Peace ! Rammoneau," said a strong voice ; "do you not know our good master ?"

"Yes, it is I, Father La Brisée. What news at La Garderie ?"

"No news, sir," said the old keeper, standing in his doorway, dressed in his velvet coat, booted, with knife in his belt, ready to bring out his dogs for the chase, and to cock his gun at his game at sunset.

Inside, everything was scrupulously clean and bright, scoured to shining, in kitchen and dining-room ; the brass on the hunting-horns shone, beside riding whips, boars' tusks, antlers, stags' heads, foxes' tails, etc., which decorated the walls.

"Will monseigneur do me the honor to come in and rest a little and have a mug of cider ?"

"That ought not to be refused, and at another time ; but to-day, my good La Brisée, it is impossible. I am going away on a long journey."

La Brisée made a movement to show he was sorry.

"Ah, monseigneur is going away," he said, "at such a time, too. What is to become of us?"

"I am coming back, my old La Brisée—I am going on a journey—simply a pleasure tour."

Monseigneur can go and come as he likes," said the old keeper resignedly; "has monsieur the count any orders to give me for the time he is away?" he added in his usual tone, as a submissive servant.

"Oh, nothing much, La Brisée; the right of hunting will presently be abolished and will leave you at leisure."

La Brisée made a tragic gesture, and sighed.

"It is the abomination of desolation. If one could be allowed to suppress——" But he stopped, remembering that his master was there, and the old man, at heart a partisan of all the reforms of the Revolution, save in what concerned the chase, closed his remarks exclaiming, "suppress the killing of game? That should never be done."

"You will see—I should say, we and many others will see, La Brisée—But let us speak of that which is here. Where is Renée?"

"Mlle. Renée is with my wife, very near here, at the farm of Verbois. They will not be long—I expect them in a quarter of an hour."

"I cannot wait—I must sleep at Rennes to-night. Kiss Renée for me. Adieu, my good La Brisée. I shall return!—I shall return!"

The Count de Surgères rode off, making a sign of farewell to his keeper. He sprang lightly and nimbly

to his saddle. The idea of a tender scene with Renée had tormented him until now. He hated these effusions of love.

It was not that he was quite incapable of tenderness. Renée was his daughter. The child of his amours with the Marquise de Louvigné. He had, for this child of a passion long since cold, a sort of mild affection. He had undoubtedly looked after her, but from afar; and though he had not spared in money and gifts, he had been farless lavish in his caresses.

As she had been born, happily for all parties, while the Marquis de Louvigné was away at a convention of gentlemen which met at Rennes, Renée had been confided to the care of La Brisée and his wife.

The child had been brought up quietly, never seeing, save from afar and by chance on a walk, her father, and more rarely still her mother, the Marquise de Louvigné, both of whom, in the presence of others, farm-hands, or curious villagers, refrained from showing any special interest in her.

She did not know her true parentage, and believed herself the child of La Brisée and his worthy but un-aristocratic consort.

The count and the marquise, one the greatest lady in the neighborhood, the other the master of the estate where La Brisée was keeper, allowed themselves to be suspected in nothing, not showing in their occasional visits the real tie which bound them to her.

Thanks to the liberality of the count, Renée had enjoyed an excellent education, and was accustomed

to maintaining the independence to be found in daughters of a good family.

She had learned to ride ; and galloped, fearlessly and quite alone, across field and wood, on a little mare, taken from the chateau stables. Father La Brisée had taken her in his journeys to the woods, and the girl had become a good huntress.

One day, when La Brisée, having finished his lunch in the woods, was sleeping in the shade of a beech, like one of Virgil's shepherds, she had gently stolen his gun. Very softly she had gone away, avoiding the crackling of dead leaves under her feet, and the breaking of dry branches.

She reached a clearing where the hunting hound, seeing her with a gun, and not looking to see who carried it, started out in quest of game. He started a pheasant, and Renée anxiously raised her piece to her shoulder, aimed—fired.

With a heavy flapping of wings the bird fell.

Renée stood an instant stunned ; though assured by the sound of her shot, she looked with surprise not unmixed with pride at this evident victory, upon her game, which lay motionless upon the damp grass, its feathers ruffled, its beak open.

The dog had sprung upon the prey, and wagging his tail, brought it to her in his mouth.

With a caress Renée repaid the beast for his prey, which she took from him ; and, like a miser with his treasure, she hid her game in the pocket of the man's coat she wore for hunting, and went back to find La

Brisée, awakened by the shot, and much excited. He was looking for his gun, which he believed had been stolen by poachers.

First he scolded Renée, then made up for it by praising her courage, this budding huntress!

He was sorry to have been deprived of his gun while sleeping, but proud of the good use to which his pupil had put the weapon.

After that Renée accompanied him on his expeditions, whenever it was feasible, and frequently shot her rabbit or roebuck.

So Renée had grown familiar with much tramping, with fatigue, with powder, and with arms.

Frequently, in their hunting, her gun under her arm, she had gone alone, far from Father La Brisée, who was busy watching the snares he had set for game. On such days, hares, pheasants and partridges might safely sit and plume themselves, even call—Renée paid no attention to her gun, nor to the appeals of her dog. Then she struck the plain beside a mill where, near the rippling stream that fed it, there stood, behind a grove of poplars, a little verdant cot, made of wild plants, vines, grasses, ivy, climbing and intertwining in a green network.

It was not only the freshness of this pleasant retreat, nor the murmur of the stream over the stones, nor yet the deep calm under the heavy shade, that attracted her.

For Marcel, the miller's son, these silent banks of the river had an equal attraction.

As often as possible, these two young people met there.

Book in hand, the young man walked slowly to where he saw Renée coming from the chase, and met her.

He pretended to read, as she pretended to hunt. But their thoughts were elsewhere, and book and game were only pretexts.

Renée was seventeen, and Marcel was entering his twentieth year.

The son of a well-to-do countryman, and the nephew of the curate, Marcel had learned a little Latin and they had thought he would take Orders; but the Church did not attract him. Filled with the charms of nature, loving woods, and fields, and flowers, seeking to study the secret of universal life and to find out its mystery, Marcel had shown a great aptitude for natural science.

With the sanction of his uncle, the curate, he had been able to take some lessons in anatomy with an old doctor, a friend of the priest's. By dint of study and patient labor he had prepared for his first degree, which he had taken at Rennes.

He was now a physician, and in his projects for the future, sketched beside the babbling stream with Renée, who, for him, neglected the chase, and used her gun only to explain her long absence, he saw himself first at Rennes, later at Paris, where alone he could follow science and achieve fame and fortune, practising the great art of healing, which the ancients believed to be a divine attribute.

Peaceful and sentimental was Marcel; and his readings of Rousseau, made him something of a philos-

opher. He worshipped nature, and his profession of faith was that of the vicaire Savoyard. His thought, enlarged beyond the circle of actualities and things immediately around him, embraced all humanity. He believed himself a citizen of the world, and held that the entire globe was the fatherland of humanity. Several works of Anacharsis Clootz had fallen into his hands, and formed his doctrine of a universal Republic.

In this projected course, the young cosmopolitan physician did not dream of going alone to Paris and glory.

Renée was to go with him, Renée, who was to be his bride ; for these two young people, without ever having said so plainly, loved each other.

They were nearly of an age, they cared for each other, and their fortunes seemingly were alike ; so there seemed no possibility of anything which should mar their happiness.

Marcel, son of the miller, whose lord was the Count de Surgères, did not descend in the scale by marrying her he believed to be the daughter of the count's chief-keeper, father La Brisée.

Good Mother Toinon, the keeper's wife, had surprised their secret, one day when she had gone to get grass for her rabbits, on the river-bank.

She had not scolded much, but she had surprised Marcel a little, even in her reticence and slight grumblings ; for Mother Toinon had insinuated that an obstacle existed on Renée's side.

The miller's son, whose well-to-do father might have had some opposition to his marriage with a simple keeper's daughter, did not guess what La Brisée wife meant. The keeper had no place, however, in her vague remarks. Was his consent nothing, or was there no reason to be uneasy? Marcel did not place much credence in the remarks of the keeper's wife, nor in the objection which was to arise on Renée's part.

When the Count de Surgères had suddenly left the country, to join the princes abroad, Mother Toinon had said, regarding the lovers narrowly, "Now, my dears, if you want to marry, you have only to ask the miller's consent."

Marcel, not understanding why Mother La Brisée said his father's consent would now be sufficient, went to find him and tell him of his desire to marry Renée.

The miller, while declaring that he had nothing to say against the girl, had tried to dissuade his son. He had showed him that he was too young; he had still to work to make a position for himself; lastly, he said what fathers always say, when they do not quite approve a marriage, and are unable to give good reasons for refusing their consent.

Surprised at this resistance, which was not what he had expected, for the young man supposed his father would bring up the relatively inferior condition of a keeper's daughter, Marcel resolved to find out the reasons of his father's refusal.

His mother—mothers are ever foolish when it comes

to the happiness of their sons—told him that Master Bertrand Le Goëz, the notary and administrator of the Count's affairs (who had become his substitute in his absence, and had his general power of attorney), had thrown most amorous glances toward La Garderie. Sweet Renée pleased him, and he had asked her in marriage, and was acceptable to La Brisée.

Marcel was really unhappy, and anger shot forth in flames at this confidence of his mother's.

So he had Master Bertrand as a rival ! That villainous, old, disagreeable man, to whose account a thousand ills had been placed !

But Renée did not love the notary. She would not have him. She would frown down his pretension. He was sure of her. On that score, he could be easy. As for La Brisée, he understood the old man's hesitation ; for he was under Master Bertrand Le Goëz, who, entrusted with all matters by the Count, was at liberty to dismiss a keeper.

There lay the danger. Though Goëz would not dare dismiss, for such reason, an old and faithful servant like La Brisée, who was the pride and the model of old-time foresters.

Therefore the wily attorney had taken care to gain the influence of the miller. It was in his power to renew the lease of certain tracts of country, belonging to the Count de Surgères, which was indispensable to the miller for feeding his mill.

Le Goëz had made that bargain readily.

Let Marcel give up all pretension to Renée, or he

would not renew the lease, and the miller, ruined, would have to give up his mill and leave the country.

The young man, having learned the projects and calculations of the secretary, said simply that he wanted to go and find him in his study, among his papers, and break his back.

His mother dissuaded him from it. Le Goëz was powerful and vindictive. True, he had the power of a noble, and for that reason, perhaps, he affected most violent revolutionary principles.

He talked about decapitations, and had advised the installation of a tribunal, charged with judging anti-revolutionists, in every community. He was a municipal officer, and corresponder with the influential agitators of the sections in Paris, the bailiff Maillard, the Marquis of Saint-Hugure, Tournier, the American, and other men of action. It was well to keep peace with such a man, not to brave him.

"What shall I do, then?" the young man had asked.

"Go away," said his good mother, "dream no more of Renée. Go to Rennes, where you will finish your studies, become a great physician, and find forgetfulness, rest, and perhaps fortune."

The young lover shook his head and went away sadly, without answering his mother. He wanted neither rest nor oblivion. He knew well that far from Renée he would not find happiness. He would remain in the country and save Renée from the odious secretary. Ah, he thought with heart open to vague aspirations of life, that he would seek a new country

where liberty flourished without danger ; he would go away to that America where France had helped to fight for independence ; there he would work, he would study, he would become a hard-working and useful citizen, far from the noise of camps, far from all the tumult of battle in old Europe. Naturally, in the dream of emigration, Renée went with him.

On the evening of that decisive conversation with his mother, Marcel found Renée once more on the banks of the stream, whose song, at that twilight hour, seemed most melancholy, most sad.

A crimson bar at setting indicated the death of day, wrapped in a shroud of red and gray clouds.

The moon, meanwhile, scattering the clouds slowly, rose in the east, and its radiant disk shone between the tall and leafy branches of the poplars.

Renée and Marcel, seated in the grass on the banks of the little river, held each other's hands and looked, where, like a circle of silver, the tender, pale planet rolled through space.

It was a solemn moment, a nuptial hour.

Like the songs of birds calling to each other in the month of May, under the branches, the voices of the two young people alternated in the softness of the evening.

" I love thee, my Renée, and shall ever love but thee."

" Thou alone, Marcel, dost fill my thoughts, and my heart is thine forever ! "

" We will never leave each other——"

" We will live side by side ! "

" Nothing can part us——"

" We will remain together until death ! "

" Thou wilt swear to follow me, my Renée——"

" I swear that where thou goest I will go, Marcel ! "

" We will love each other always——"

" Ever will we love ; I swear it ! "

" May the branches, emblems of liberty, and the trees which are the pillars of Nature's temple, may these forest people receive and witness my vows !" said Marcel, with an emphasis which showed in both word and gesture, as he raised his hand toward the trees which the Revolution honored as symbols of the nation, in sign of oath.

Renée imitated Marcel, and, like him, her hand raised, vowed to love forever, and to follow always him to whom she gave herself freely, and this was the oath under the poplars which shone like silver under the soft moon's light.

CHAPTER X.

THE INVOLUNTARY ENLISTING.

WHEN the two young people had, with a chaste kiss, sealed their reciprocal vows exchanged beneath the serenity of the moonlight which flooded the sky and lighted up the last clouds in the west, they thought they heard a crackling of leaves behind them, followed by a cry like the hooting of a screech-owl.

That bird of ill-omen troubled them in their ecstasy.

They embraced each other fervently, yet with a secret fear despite their rapture.

Marcel took a stone and threw it in the direction whence the sound had come, seeking to dislodge that importunate screamer.

"Make off, villainous owl," cried Marcel, looking angrily toward the dark wood where doubtless, amid the trees, sat the witness of their love.

No bird flew thence. Instead of a flapping of wings there was a sound as of footsteps retreating precipitately from the lovers, and it seemed to them that they heard among the leaves the laughter of a man.

Some one had surprised them, spied upon them, heard them!

They both returned to the village sad, silent and uneasy.

"I fear this augurs ill," said Renée at the moment of parting, beside the hedge of La Garderie.

"Bah," said Marcel, trying to make the girl feel at ease, "it was some clown who wanted to amuse himself at our expense, some jealous fellow who was enraged at our joy. Let us think no more of the matter, sweet! We love each other, and have sworn to be true to each other always, and so nothing can separate us."

And they parted, both alarmed by the warning they had received. An enemy had surely watched them! Who wanted to destroy their happiness? Who could thus follow and threaten them? Who objected to their felicity? The memory of the words of the

millers' wife and the thought of that Bertrand Le Goëz, who dared to desire to possess Renée, presented itself at once to Marcel's mind. He reasoned with himself and attempted to fortify himself against the vague apprehension which penetrated his very soul. "Bertrand Le Goëz is a bad, jealous man," he said to himself; "but what can he do to us, since Renée loves me and has sworn to cleave to me?"

He determined, nevertheless, to be on his guard, and to watch the movements of the secretary.

The fear he experienced was not without foundation.

Le Goëz multiplied his visits to the mill. He had warned Marcel's father twice that his lease was soon to expire and that he need not count on renewing it. By virtue of the right which the Count de Surgères had given him, Le Goëz signified to the miller that he would have to give up his land. No delay would be allowed him.

Always, too, the secretary warned Marcel's father that, should he send his son to Rennes, and assure him that the youth had given up all hopes of marrying Renée, he would consider the renewal of the lease.

The miller was much distressed, for his son clung to his intentions, and swore he would wed Renée, in spite of Bertrand Le Goëz; on her part, the young girl had answered all the overtures of the enamored secretary with cold refusals.

Bertrand Le Goëz resolved to part them violently.

France was in arms. On all sides there came from

the towns volunteers who took pikes and muskets, and went forth to die for their country.

The secretary, in his capacity of attorney of the community, assembled, one Sunday morning, all the young men around and addressed to them a warm appeal, calling upon them to go to Rennes to re-enforce the regiment of Ille-et-Vilaine.

Several volunteers came forward, enlisted, and left next day.

Bertrand Le Goëz expressed himself as objecting strongly to the bad example and laziness of those who, young, strong, and able to carry a gun, threw away the honor of defending their country, and preferred to grow weak in the company of old men and girls.

His harangue was meant directly for Marcel.

He, understanding exactly, what use Le Goëz meant to make of his inaction, went directly to the keeper.

He found La Brisée polishing his guns, and whistling a hunter's song.

Renée sat sewing beside the keeper's wife.

She gave a cry of surprise at seeing Marcel enter.

Danger was ahead. She questioned him with a look—begging him to reassure her.

"Father La Brisée," said the young man, much moved, "I come to bid you and Renée adieu! I am going."

"O God," cried the young girl with her hand on her heart. "Why are you going, Marcel? Does that wicked Le Goëz still want to take away your father's land?"

"That is not my only reason for going away."

"And where are you going, lad?" asked the keeper quietly, still polishing his gun.

"I do not know. Throughout the village I am taunted with being idle; yet it is not fear that keeps me from taking a musket, but because I consider war as a plague, and the people who go into it as sheep going to the slaughter, as my master Jean-Jacques has demonstrated! Why do they kill each other for interests which touch them not? War for life is just—that is, when slaves take up arms,—it is the war of liberty against tyranny, and that Jean Jacques Rousseau himself would have approved."

"Then you have enlisted, lad?" inquired La Brisée. "It is well—very well! You have done as the others have done. You are good—you will go and kill those Prussian thieves, I hope. Pity you never cared for the chase. You are not like Renée—she would make a fine soldier. But you will learn courage, Marcel."

Renée had risen, weak and deathly pale.

"I am about to leave the country," said Marcel, with rising emotion, "because I can no longer live amid threats and reproaches. Father La Brisée, I am going with my father and mother, who are likewise driven out, to establish myself in America."

"What!" said the keeper, astonished, letting his gun fall; "you are not going into the army? What will you do in America, good heavens!"

"I want," said the young man, firmly, "to take

with me, as my wife, your daughter Renée. There we will found a family, there we will be happy under the great trees of the wilderness !”

Renée had fallen against La Brisée, saying, “ Father ! father ! come with us to that America, which I do not know, but which must be beautiful, since Marcel says we can be happy there.”

The keeper had risen, much troubled, and addressing his wife, who sat motionless, as though she had not heard, still drawing her needle through, mechanically, and said :

“ Well, there’s another ! Take Renée to America ! Marry her ! What do you say, old woman ?”

Mother La Brisée stopped sewing, lifted her head and said severely, “ I say that it is all beastly ! It is time to stop it ! It is necessary, La Brisée, to tell these two turtle-doves something. They do not know they are not equal. Tell them, thou, about it.”

Then La Brisée revealed to Renée that she was the daughter of the Count de Surgères and could not marry a miller’s son.

But she said of her absent father, that, having left her to the paid care of La Brisée, he had no right to dispose of her, nor to keep her from giving herself to the man she loved. She considered that the irregularity of her birth placed her beyond social conventionalities, wherefore she proposed to be quite free.

The Revolution was everywhere, and sowed in the quietest minds, even in the soul of a young girl like Renee, the germs of independence and liberty.

Marcel reflected. The new position of Renée had upset all his projects and disconcerted him.

The nobility to which Renée belonged did not seem to him a serious obstacle. The Revolution had abolished classes and declared all men equal. But Renée was rich. She could not follow, as she had promised, the son of a ruined miller, like himself; what was pure love and youthfulness, in other eyes would seem like a calculating cupidity on his part for captivating her unworthily. No! He could not accept such sacrifice, though Renée was ready to make it. He must force himself to banish remembrance and he would leave France and seek no more for happiness, only for rest and oblivion. He would go alone to America.

His resolution was quickly taken. He would declare his decision to leave the country, to put distance between himself and his love—when some one knocked.

Madame La Brisée went to the door. Bertrand Le Goëz was there. He wore a scarf and was accompanied by two commissioners of the district, wearing hats with tricolored plumes, and the insignia of municipal delegates.

As La Brisée stood, astonished at the sight of the three personages, Le Goëz said to one of the commissioners, indicating the young man, "Citizens, there is Marcel. Do your duty!"

"Are you going to arrest me," said Marcel, astounded. "What have I done?"

"We simply come to ask you, citizen," said one of the commissioners, "if it is true that you are about to

leave, to desert your home, and your flag, as your father, the miller has said ? ”

“ I have thought of doing so.”

“ You see,” said Le Goëz, triumphantly, taking the commissioners to witness.

“ Then, you desire to emigrate ? You want to bear arms against your country ? Do you not know that the law punishes those who desert now ? Speak ! ”

“ I never meant to desert. I do not emigrate. I can no longer live here. Poverty drives me and mine forth. I go to find beneath another sky work and liberty.”

“ Liberty is to be found beneath the standard of the nation,” said the commissioner. “ As for work, the nation will give you plenty ! You are a doctor, are you not ? ”

“ I shall be ; I must still get one more diploma.”

“ You shall have it—in your regiment ! ”

“ My regiment ! What do you mean ? ”

“ This. We have an order for you,” said the second commissioner. “ Our armies need surgeons, and we are charged, my colleague and I, to find them.”

He handed a paper to Marcel, saying, “ Sign here, and in twenty-four hours be at Angers. They will tell you there to which corps you are assigned.”

“ And if I refuse to sign ? ”

“ We will arrest you immediately, as a refractory, an agent of emigration, and we will take you to Angers but to prison. Sign ! ”

Marcel hesitated.

Bertrand Le Goëz, winking, said to one of the commissioners : " You would have done better to follow my advice and arrest him at once. He will not sign, he is an aristocrat, an enemy of the people."

La Brisée and his wife sat, struck dumb, watching the scene.

Renée, meantime, who had approached Marcel, taking a pen, and handing it to him, said, softly : " Sign, Marcel ! It is imperative, I ask it of you ! "

" So you want me to leave you—to leave you defenceless against all the attempts of that wretch," he said, pointing to Le Goëz.

Renée answered, whispering : " Sign ! I shall go to you—I promise it."

Marcel said : " You—among soldiers—you in the army ? " in a subdued voice.

" Why not ? I am like a boy ! I can handle a gun ; ask my father—' she is not like you.' Go—sign ! "

Marcel took the pen and nervously signed the deed of enlistment, then addressed the commissioners.

" Where must I go ? "

" To Angers—where they are raising a regiment from Mayenne and Loire. Good luck, Sir Doctor."

" I salute you, Commissioners."

" Have you nothing to say to me," said Le Goëz, in a jesting tone.

Marcel pointed to the door.

" You are wrong to be angry with me. Now that you are a good ' sans-culotte ' and serve your country, I esteem you, Marcel ; and to prove it I will renew the

lease for your parents," said the secretary, laughing cruelly.

Bertrand Le Goëz retired rubbing his hands. He had gained his point. His rival was going far away, among the enemy. Renée, of whose birth he knew the secret, was in his power. Would Marcel ever return?

And she, once his wife, would bring him part of the count's domain, of which he was taking care. He saw himself already master of those vast estates of which he was now but a keeper. He could show himself good-natured toward Marcel's parents, and let them keep their lands; he would have them for allies and Marcel could not influence them against him. Everything reassured him that some day he should go about, not as inspector, but as veritable owner, then, with Renée on his arm, as his wife, over the count's lands, whom the emigrant laws had power to keep out. He took good care to make good her inheritance.

Renée, meantime, after declaring to La Brisée and Toinon that she never would have, in spite of Bertrand, any other love, and that some day she would marry Marcel, had gone, at evening, to the usual trysting place, on the river-bank, under the poplars.

There she met Marcel, very sad and uneasy. His hand trembled feverishly, and tears stood in his eyes.

She reassured him, repeating her promise to see him in the regiment,

And when he again seemed incredulous, she said, firmly: "You shall see! Wouldn't I make a fine soldier?" she added, laughing. "Why! I haven't your

ideas about war ! I am no philosopher ; but I love you, and mean to follow you everywhere."

"But the fatigue—the rations? The gun is heavy and the knapsack as well. You have no idea of the painful work of war, poor child !" Marcel said this to dissuade her from the attempt, which, to him, savored of madness.

"I am strong—I can do it. Many young men go daily to the war who are not as robust as I, and they have not, as I have, a lover beside the standard," she added proudly.

"But if you should be wounded ? "

"Are you not a surgeon ? You would take care of me—save me."

Some days after, at dusk, one might have seen, walking slowly along, a young man, going to Angers, carrying at the end of a cane a small bundle of clothes, and wearing the costume of the National Guard. This young man presented himself, as soon as he got to Angers, at the mayor's office, and was enrolled as a volunteer, in the battalion of Mayenne-et-Loire, under the name of René Marcel, son of Marcel, the miller of Surgères.

The young man had said that he wished to enlist in the company where his brother Marcel, already enrolled, acted as aide.

So the young girl was admitted without difficulty. No one suspected her sex. This enlisting of young women, in masculine attire and with strange names, produced, occasionally, at that time, confusion and all

sorts of discoveries. The regiments of the Revolution received, thus, many feminine recruits.

There are preserved, among the military annals of the Republic, obscure names and records of, glorious deeds of service performed by these heroic warrior-maids. Their names are inscribed on a deathless page.

In the regiment of Mayenne-et-Loire, where Renée became a great favorite and was called the "Joli Sergeant," having attained to silver stripes, a cruel deception was soon exposed.

She could not be very long near him she had come to find. A superior order came to aide Marcel to go to the 4th Artillery at Valence, where they were badly in need of surgeons, and who were hurrying to Toulon.

The separation was cruel. The necessity of concealing their grief and hiding their tears augmented the bitterness of parting—every one watched the two, and too great show of emotion would have betrayed them.

They embraced each other at parting, each promising to make every effort to rejoin the other.

Then came Renée's visit to Captain Bonaparte, which showed how anxious she was to be once more near him she loved.

Thanks to the protection of young Robespierre, who was Bonaparte's friend, the exchange was effected, and we will not tarry to see the meeting. under the command of Beaurepaire, the heroic defender of Verdun, of Renée, enlisted for love, and Marcel, the humanitarian philosopher, the pupil

of Jean-Jacques, the apostle of peace and universal fraternity, a citizen of the world, as he called himself, having found a somewhat involuntary enlistment.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONFIDENCE OF MADAME SANS GÊNE.

AFTER the departure of the "Pretty Sergeant," Bonaparte, engrossed in thought, began again to work. Following on the chart his vast projects for the defence of the Mediterranean coast, he cast an ambitious glance on the mountains between France and Piedmont, the key to Italy.

In the midst of these strategic calculations a knock at the door made him lift his head.

"Who comes now?" he thought. He was impatient at being again disturbed. "It seems to be a day for visits." And he called, "Who's there?"

"It is I," answered a woman's voice, "Catharine, the laundress."

"Come in," he growled.

Catharine entered, a little embarrassed, and said, taking her basket from her arm, "Do not disturb yourself, Captain; I have brought your clothes. I thought you might need them."

Without looking up, Bonaparte said, "The clothes? very well. Put them on the bed."

Catharine stood still, amazed. She neither advanced

nor retreated, and kept her basket in her hand. She thought, "I must have a foolish look! But this man imposes upon me in a way that is beyond my power to control."

She who was called through the Saint-Roch quarter, la Sans Gêne, and who really justified that appellation, was actually timid.

She stared at the bed to which Bonaparte had pointed; she shifted her basket on her arm; then, too, she felt in her apron-pocket for the bill she had brought, but could not decide what to do.

She "shook in her shoes," as they say.

Bonaparte continued to study the chart before him, seeming to pay no further attention to her.

At last she shook herself slightly, to let him know she was there.

"He is not at all gallant," she thought. "Doubtless, though one is decent and doesn't come for—anything out of the way, one may still be worth looking at."

And, somewhat piqued, she began again her light movement.

"What! you still here?" Bonaparte said, with little politeness, and, after a short silence, he added, with his accustomed brusqueness, "What do you want?"

"Citizen, pardon me, Captain! I wanted to tell you—that I am about to be married," said Catharine.

She was as rosy as a red-cheeked apple. Her bosom heaved under her linen kerchief. Decidedly the captain made her lose her self-possession.

"Ah, you are going to marry?" said Bonaparte,

coldly. "Well, so much the better for you, my girl. I wish you much joy. I presume you are going to marry some good fellow who keeps a laundry?"

"No, Captain," said Catharine, quickly and coolly, "a soldier, a sergeant."

"Ah, well! You do well to marry a soldier, mademoiselle," said Bonaparte, in a more friendly tone; "to be a soldier is to be doubly a Frenchman. I wish you good luck."

Bonaparte went back to his work, little interested in the love-affairs of his laundress, but he could not help smiling, as he looked at Catharine's plump figure, which was radiant with health, and her cheeks were so charmingly rosy, in fine contrast to her reserved manner, and the hypocritical quiet she assumed when she brought in his washing.

He was always fond of plump women, alike when he was the thin and starved young officer and when he was the nervous consul; even as the stouter emperor, he always preferred to be surrounded by robust figures.

Catharine's ruddy beauty drew him a moment from his strategical preoccupation,

With a rather brutal gallantry which was usual with him, he came quickly, toward the young laundress and laid his heavy hand upon her neck.

Catharine gave a little shriek.

The future victor was not one to hesitate. He began the attack.

He redoubled his force, and caught Catharine, mak-

ing her retreat until she reached the bed, on which she sat, and began to defend herself.

This she did, without false modesty, without showing herself at all frightened.

And Bonaparte, forgetting all about Toulon, seemed anxious to hasten his work of getting near her, by shortening the siege and assaulting the place at once. She made an outwork of her basket, which she set before her, like a gabion, saying to the surprised besieger, "No, no, Captain ! It is too late ! You cannot take me ! I have capitulated ! So my husband says."

"Really ?" said Bonaparte, stopping. "Then this marriage is really serious ?"

"Very serious, and I came to tell you, besides announcing my marriage, that I cannot do your washing any longer."

"You will shut up shop, my pretty one ?"

"The shop would fare ill these days. And then, too, I want to follow my husband !"

"To the regiment ?" asked Bonaparte, amazed.

"Why not ?"

"I've seen that before." And, thinking of Renée, who enlisted to be with Marcel, he said, "Ah, the army has at present more than one family. So, you, too, are going to learn to fire your ammunition, and perhaps to manage a cannon," he said, in a teasing tone.

"I can use a gun, Captain, and as for the cannon, I should be glad to take lessons of you, but my husband is in the infantry," she said, laughingly. "No, I shall

not fight, unless I have to do so, but they need canteen-carriers in the regiments. I shall supply drink to my husband's comrades ; and I hope to have your patronage, Captain, if you should serve with us."

"I shall write myself one of your customers, but not just yet. The minister will not let me fight, nor—" He was going to say "nor eat." But he thought better of it, and simply closed his sentence with,—“nor spend money at the canteen. That will do later—much later, my girl,” he added with a sigh.

And he returned to his table, a prey to sad thoughts. Catharine, without saying a word, for she was disturbed by the sadness of this young officer (whose story she knew), began rapidly to arrange the clothes on the bed as her client had bidden her.

Then, with a courtesy, she went to the door, opened it and said, as if in thought, “Oh, I ruined one of your shirts, by accident, and have replaced it—it is there with the drawers and handkerchiefs. *Au revoir*, Captain.”

“*Au revoir!* Luck to your canteen, my pretty girl,” said Bonaparte, who was already deep in study.

As she came down the stairs of the Hôtel de Metz, Catharine said to herself: “I took him his bill, too ; but I hadn't the courage to give it to him. Bah ! He'll pay me some day—I believe in him—I am not like that man Fouché. I am sure he will make his way.”

Later, she thought, laughing all alone, and put into a good-humor by an amusing reminiscence, “How he tormented me, that captain ! Oh, he had mixed up all

his papers, too. There was no harm in it. Why, it amused him a little, and he has very few occasions to romp, poor young man."

And she added, blushing a little, "If he had desired it! Oh, not now—at another time, before I was promised to Lefebvre!"

She stopped herself in the retrospective regret she felt in regard to the thin, sad artillery officer.

Pursuing her train of thought she exclaimed, gayly, "Really, he did not think of it, else he never would have done it! I must run and see if Lefebvre is at the shop. He loves me well! And I am sure he will make me a better husband than Captain Bonaparte would!"

She had scarce entered her shop when cries and shouts resounded through the street. She opened the door to see what was going on.

The entire neighborhood was aroused.

Then she saw Lefebvre, without gun or buff-coat, but bearing his sword in his hand, a weapon ornamented with a golden dragon.

His comrades surrounded him, and seemed to be carrying him in triumph with them.

"Catharine, I am a lieutenant," cried he, gayly, stopping beside his betrothed.

"Long live Lieutenant Lefebvre," shouted the National Guards, throwing up hats and guns.

"Add, my comrades," said the new Lieutenant, presenting Catharine, "Long live Citizeness Lefebvre, for here is my wife! We are to be married next week."

"Long live Citizeness Lefebvre!" shouted the enthusiastic guards.

"Long live Madame Sans-Gêne," responded the crowd of neighbors.

"Why do they shout so loud?" asked Catharine softly of her husband, thinking of Neipperg, lying in the next room. They will make our sick man—"

* * * * *

In the little room of the Hôtel de Metz, meantime, the penniless and unemployed artillery officer, having finished with his map, arranged methodically on a deal shelf the clothes Catharine had brought.

"Why! she left no bill," said the future emperor, well satisfied with this oversight, for he would have had to tell her he could not pay her.

He added, making a mental note of his debts,

"I must owe her at least thirty francs. The devil! I must go and settle with her the first time I get some money. She is a good girl, this Catharine, and I shall not forget it!"

And he dressed to go and dine with his friends the Permons.

That little confidence made Napoleon, many years after, speak kindly.

It was only after many years that she found, at a most unexpected moment, the payment of that forgotten wash-bill.

And those readers who wish to follow with us, will find again in the following pages, Neipperg, Blanche,

the Pretty Sergeant, Marcel, and little Henriot, and the many escapades and adventures of Catharine, the laundress, later the Maréchale Lefebvre, then Duchess of Dantzig, who was ever sympathetic and popular, a good, jolly companion, heroic and charitable, bearing the Parisian nickname of *Madame Sans-Gêne*.

BOOK SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE POST-CHAISE.

"SEE, they will not stop ! See how the postilion makes his whip crack in passing L'Ecu ; he seemed not to see us ! "

"Transient travellers are not numerous now-a-days."

"We can see no more of them ! They go to the Lion d'Or."

"Or to the Cheval Blanc."

Sighs alternated with these words, sadly exchanged between the stout keeper of the hotel of L'Ecu and his heavy wife on the threshold of the chief inn of Dam-marten.

Passengers in coaches were rare after the events which had followed the 20th of June.

The vehicle which had passed before the disappointed eyes of the keepers of L'Ecu had left Paris early in the evening. It was really the last which got safely over

the border, for the order to hold all who wanted to leave Paris was issued that night as soon as the resolution to attack the Tuileries at dawn had been taken.

Informed by friends of that which was going on at the sections, and of the movement which was coming, the Baron de Lowendaal had postponed his marriage with the daughter of the Marquis de Laveline, and had hurriedly made ready to depart.

Being a farmer on a large scale, he feared the near approach of confiscation by the national powers. The Baron de Lowendaal scented danger.

The eve of August 10th, therefore, had seen him jump into a post-chaise, accompanied by his factotum, Leonard, carrying with him all the money he had been able to collect, and ordering the driver to proceed, if need be, with fresh relays of horses.

The baron travelled as one who feared for his life.

At Crépy it became necessary to halt. The horses could do no more.

Morning had followed night, and, across the plain great day was driving away the clouds and lifting the darkness. The last stars set in the blue vault of the sky, where, on the side near Soissons, the sun rose.

The Baron de Lowendaal was going to his château, near the village of Jemmapes, on the Belgian border. Originally a Belgian, but become quite French, the baron thought he would be secure there. The Revolution would never spread to the Belgian territory; besides, the army of the Prince of Brunswick was assembled on the frontier; it would not be slow in bring-

ing the "sans-culottes" to reason and in re-establishing the king.

He had quitted France but for a short time, until he should marry the Marquis de Laveline's charming daughter. A little wedding tour!

He had fixed the sixth of November for the solemnization of his marriage, because he had to arrange a considerable piece of business in the town of Verdun, where he had a tobacco farm.

He had decided to leave Paris quickly, so as to be sure of escaping should he be followed. His horses were excellent and could not be overtaken.

He set out, after having arranged some protective measures between himself and the patriots.

His nose at the curtain, he sniffed the morning air, and when they had passed the first houses of Crépy, quite reassured, he ordered the driver to halt.

The latter obeyed very gladly. He had been sorry to rush thus on the way without food for his beasts, without a lamp, without a pleasant chat. He could tell so much, too! It was not every day that one could see Paris arming itself and preparing to dislodge a king from the palace of his fathers! That was news, surely. How one would be listened to and feasted who could relate what passed at the sections!

At the Hôtel de la Poste they took a relay.

While the host and his servants pressed round, offering the baron a bed, proposing breakfast, enumerating the various refreshments, and turning about with an uneasy air, the confidential clerk, Leonard, went off for

a moment under the pretext of seeing that no over-inquisitive citizens were about.

After the attempted escape of the king at Varennes, not only had the municipalities become more vigilant, but everywhere there were men ambitious to rival the glory of Drouet, who had had the honor to arrest Louis XVI. Volunteers examined and searched every suspected vehicle. A post-chaise appealed most strongly to the vigilance of the patriots.

Happily for the baron, local patriotism had not yet been aroused when his chaise made its noisy entrance into the quiet town of Crépy-en-Valois.

While the traveller sat down to table before an appetizing cup of chocolate, brought hot by a buxom waitress, Leonard had found his way into the stable.

There, by the light of a lantern, he sat down to read the letter Mademoiselle de Laveline had given him at parting.

Blanche had earnestly asked, adding to her prayer two double Louis d'or, that he should not give that letter, a very important one, until the baron was quite gone from Paris.

Leonard, scenting a mystery whose discovery might be turned to use, resolved to learn the contents of this serious message.

"The secrets of masters may often bring the fortunes of servants," he soliloquized.

He had noticed that this marriage, which pleased the baron so much, seemed very distasteful to Mademoiselle de Laveline.

Perhaps in that letter, left in his care, he would find a grave revelation from which he could draw much profit. Surely, but with such care, that he could give this strange missive its original aspect, he began to open with his knife the seal, which he had warmed at the lantern-flame.

He read, and his face expressed the greatest surprise when he drew out the secret he had sought.

This was the contents of Blanche's letter :

“ MONSIEUR LE BARON :

“ I owe you a guilty avowal, which I must make, that I may dispel an illusion concerning me, which facts would not take long to disclose.

“ You have given me some affection, and you have obtained my father's consent to a marriage in which you have thought to find happiness, perhaps love.

“ Good fortune cannot come to you from such a union ; I could promise you no love, for my heart belongs to another. Forgive me that I do not give you his name, who possesses all my soul, and whose wife I consider myself to be, before God !

“ I have a final revelation to make to you. I am a mother, Monsieur le Baron, and death alone could part me from my husband, the father of my little Henriot. I shall follow M. de Laveline to Jemmapes, since he desires it ; but I trust that, informed of the obstacle which stands immovably against the fulfilment of your plans, you will pity me and spare me the shame of having to tell my father the real cause which makes this union impossible.

“ I rely, monsieur, on your discretion as a gallant man. Burn this letter and believe in my gratitude and my friendship.

“ BLANCHE.”

Leonard, having read it, gave a cry of surprise and joy.

"Whew ! There I can make a fortune," he said.

He turned the letter again and again in his hands, as he closed it, as if trying to squeeze out of it, by telling its secret, all the money he thought it contained.

"I thought there was something," he said with a grin ; "M. the baron wanted Mademoiselle Blanche, and mademoiselle didn't want M. the baron. But I'd never have imagined that Mademoiselle Blanche de Laveline had a child—and I'd have supposed, still less, that she would relate her escapade to M. the baron ! What creatures women are ! She doesn't know, little Miss Blanche, what she has done ! what folly ! The stupidity was in committing the secret to paper. It is well it was I."

He stopped ; replaced the letter, which had explained matters, and in the half-light of the stable, he turned it over in his hands saying,

"She wrote it herself. She can't deny the writing. Oh, she is altogether too naïve ! She might regret what she has told in a moment of abandon and over-excitement of nerves. Happily it is I to whom she has confided the care of her honor and her fortune."

He hesitated a moment. Then putting the letter into his pocket he added :

"Mademoiselle Blanche will pay well some day, perhaps—when she has become Baroness de Lowendaal—that is sure to be—for the return of this letter ; so I shall keep it and demand a good price to give it up."

And Leonard laughed again, thinking of his gains.

"Perhaps," he muttered, "I shall not be content with money—I may ask more—or at least another reward, for I, too, find Mademoiselle Blanche fair. But, at present, I must simply guard well this proof, this weapon—and encourage quietly my master's hopes, who, more now than ever, must marry Mademoiselle Blanche."

And Leonard, after buttoning his coat carefully, felt, to be sure that tell-tale letter was there, and with the deep and fierce joy of a usurer, guarded the paper which might some day place in his hands the imprudent victim who had signed it.

He found the baron, on his return, a little uneasy, though having breakfasted, because a crowd of curious folk had assembled before the hotel, and were looking at the chaise. He had asked twice to have the horses put in.

Leonard explained his absence, by saying that he had gone to see that nothing would hinder their departure.

The baron was satisfied, and in high spirits he re-entered his chaise, which rolled thundering over the streets, now no longer the king's highway.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE FRUIT-SHOP.

AT the door of her fruit-shop, in the Rue de Montreuil, at Versailles, Mother Hoche managed to serve her customers and to cast an occasional glance at a little fellow, rosy and chubby, who played in the space between piles of cabbage and heaps of carrots.

"Henriot! Henriot! Don't put that into your mouth! You'll make yourself ill," she cried from time to time, as the little fellow attempted to suck at a carrot or to eat a turnip.

And the good woman continued to attend to the orders of the housekeepers, at the same time sighing, "The little imp, what an appetite he has, and he must handle everything! But he's a sweet babe just the same."

Then she added, turning to the customer she served smilingly, "And with this, what else do you want?"

Suddenly she stopped in her dainty work, which consisted of measuring herbs for a country-woman who was going to make a salad—she gave a loud cry of surprise.

On the door-step, in front of a lieutenant—on whose arm was a fresh and dainty young woman, in an organdie gown, and with a high hat on her head—stood

a tall fellow with a proud air and a martial face, who came toward her.

He wore a grenadier's uniform. He smiled and put out his hand.

"Eh, well, Mother Hoche, don't you know me?" he asked, advancing quickly and embracing the good woman, who stood moved and trembling with joy and pride.

The customers, abashed, stood still and stared at the cabriolet in which the young man and his two companions had come from Paris. They admired the new uniform, the hat, the scarf, the belt and the shining gold of the sabre of this young soldier.

And the neighbors murmured, "He is a captain."

"Ah, I know him well," said one of the best-informed housekeepers, "he is little Lazare, the shopkeeper's nephew, whom she has educated as a son; we have often seen him playing with the lads of his age at the Place d'Armes, and now he's become a captain."

"Yes, my good Mother Hoche," said Lazare Hoche to his excellent aunt, his adopted mother, "you see I am captain. Ha! It is a surprise! named but yesterday, it is true. I vow I couldn't get here sooner. As soon as I received my promotion I ran hither to embrace you. I wanted that you should be the first to enjoy my rank, so I invited myself and my two friends here."

And Hoche, turning, presented his two friends.

"François Lefebvre, lieutenant, a companion of mine in the French Guard. A good fellow! He is, besides,

the man who took me to get my arms," said Hoche, tapping his companion's shoulder familiarly.

"And now you are my superior," said Lefebvre gayly.

"Oh, you will overtake me! You may even leave me far behind! War is a lottery in which all the world can draw a good number! The only condition is to live; but let me finish my introductions. Mother, this is the good Catharine, Comrade Lefebvre's wife," said Hoche, introducing to the market-woman the ex-laundress of the Rue Royale-Saint-Roch.

Catharine took two steps forward rapidly, without ceremony, and embraced the market-woman, who kissed her warmly on both cheeks.

"Now," said Hoche, "that you know each other, we will leave you a moment, mother."

"What, are you going?" exclaimed the good woman, displeased. "It was not worth the trouble of coming for this."

"Be easy, we must go away a little while. Lefebvre and I have some people—officers—waiting for us," replied Hoche, winking to his companion to warn him to be silent. "But we are coming back; it will not take us long, I fancy. Meantime, you will prepare us a ragout such as you alone, mother, know how to cook."

"Of goose and turnips, eh, laddie?"

"Yes, it is delicious; and then Catharine wants to talk to you about the little chap who is looking at us with such wide-open eyes as he sits there!"

"Little Henriot?" asked the woman, surprised.

"Yes," Catharine interposed. "I must talk to you, my good woman, about little Henriot, on whose account I am here, else I had let Lefebvre come alone with Captain Hoche. They did not need me for their business in the woods of Satory. I must see you about the little one."

"Well, we will talk about the child, and you can help me scrape the turnips," said the woman, "and then we will kill a chicken, with a stuffed omelette ; it will suit you, eh, lads ? "

"That stuffed omelette will be famous," said Hoche to Lefebvre. "Mother makes it so well ! Come, François, we must leave these two to talk and cook. Later, ladies ! We are being waited for now ! "

And the two friends went to the mysterious trysting-place, of which Catharine seemed to know something.

The two women, left alone, began preparations for the meal.

While shelling peas and helping to pick the chicken, Catharine told the market-woman that she had come to take the child to his mother, and that that was the reason of her coming.

The good woman was much moved. She had become much attached to Henriot. He reminded her of Lazare, when he had played, a little lad, on the doorstep.

Catharine also told her that her husband was going away, whence arose the haste in taking away Blanche de Laveline's boy.

"Where is he going ? " asked Mother Hoche.

"Why! to the frontier, where they are fighting. Lefebvre will be made captain!"

"Like Lazare!"

"Yes, in the 13th Light Infantry. He has been ordered to go to Verdun."

"Well, your husband is going to the army, and why can't little Henriot stay here? You can see him just as often as you like, and you can come for him at the last moment when he has to be taken to his mother!"

"There's a little difficulty," laughed Catharine, "and that is, that I am going with Lefebvre."

"To the regiment? You, my pretty girl?"

"Yes, to the 13th, Mother Hoche! I have in my pocket my commission as canteen-bearer!"

Catharine smiled to the child, who had not stopped looking at her, with the deep and fixed glance of childhood, which seems to ponder and to engrave on the young mind all it sees, hears, touches, learns.

Then she drew from her bosom a great official document, signed and sealed with the seal of the War-office. She showed it triumphantly to the older woman, saying, "You see, I have a regular commission! and I must rejoin my detachment in eight hours, at the latest; it is necessary to deliver Verdun. Down there, there are royalists conspiring with Brunswick, and we are going to root them out," added the new cantinière.

Mother Hoche looked at her with surprise. "What! You are cantinière, there," she said shaking her head; then looking almost enviously at Sans-Gêne she added, "Ah! it's a fine thing. I should have loved to do such

a thing too, in my time ! One marches to the beat of the drum !—one sees the country—one always carries joy about with one—the soldier is at his best beside the canteen ! He forgets his misery, and dreams of being a general or a corporal. And then, on the day of battle, one can feel that one is not a useless woman, good only for idle tears and stupid fear at the sound of the cannonade ! One is part of the army, and from line to line one travels, giving to the defenders of the nation, heroism and courage, in a little glass, for just two sous. The *eau-de-vie* which the cantinière carries is fire as well, and her little cask has more than once helped to decide the victory. How I admire you, and how much I'd like to be like you, girl. Really, were I younger, I would ask to go with my dear Lazare, as you are going with Lefebvre. But the child ? What will you do with little Henriot in the midst of a camp, during engagements, in the fire of battle ? ”

“ As cantinière of the 13th, I have a right to a horse and wagon. We have already bought one, by dint of economy,” said Catharine proudly ; “ I sold out my laundry ; and Lefebvre, when he married, received a small sum, that came as inheritance from his father, the miller at Ruffach, very near my home, in Alsace. Oh, we will want for nothing. And the little lad will be made as much of as a general's son. Won't you have such a fine time, you'll not be sorry you came with us ? ” she said to the boy, as she lifted him up and kissed him.

Just then the sound of footsteps was heard ; and

the child, quite frightened, hid his head on Catharine's shoulder, shrieking

Hoche entered, leaning on Lefebvre arm.

He wore a bloody handkerchief, as a bandage, hiding half his face.

"Don't be frightened, mother," he called from the door. "It's nothing! Only a cut which won't keep me from my meal," he added gayly.

"O God! You are wounded! What has happened?" cried Mother Hoche. "You have taken him to a place where they tried to kill him, Lieutenant Lefebvre!"

Hoche began to laugh, and said, "Mother, don't accuse Lefebvre! He acted as my witness in an affair that is now over. A duel with a colleague. I tell you again, it's nothing."

"I was quite sure you wouldn't be much hurt," said Catharine; "but he——"

Hoche did not answer. He was busy quieting his adopted mother, and in getting water to bathe a bleeding cut on his face, which crossed his forehead and stopped just above his nose.

"Hoche has been as valiant as ever," said Lefebvre. "Just fancy, long ago in the Guards, and later in the militia, a lieutenant, named Serre, who is, by all odds, the worst fellow in any company,—he had been after Hoche, on account of a racket made in a tavern, where Lazare happened to be treating some of his old comrades. This fellow reported Lazare—he had had him put into a cell for three months, for refusing to give the

names of the men who were being sought—and when he came from prison, a meeting was decided between Serre and Lazare. You must know that Serre had a reputation as a swordsman—he was the terror of the quarter—had killed or wounded several men in duelling.”

“It was risky to fight that fellow,” said mother Hoche, quite upset by the thought of her dear Lazare’s danger.

“But,” said Lefebvre, “the duel could not come off, for Lazare was only a lieutenant, and Serre was a captain——”

“They have fought now——”

“Yes, since he had become the equal of his opponent.”

“But he who is so brave, so agile, how did he happen to get that dreadful cut?”

“In a very simple way, mother,” laughed Hoche; “I am a poor duellist, for I believe that a soldier leaves his post who risks his life in a personal quarrel; yet, I could not remain quiet under the threats and insults of that cad—he ill-treated the recruits, and had insulted the wife of an absent friend.”

Lefebvre took Hoche’s hand and pressed it warmly, saying, with tears in his eyes, “That last was for me, It was for us he fought!” he added, turning to Catharine. “It was he, this man Serre, who pretended that you had a lover hidden in your room on the 10th of August.”

“The monster!” cried Catharine, furious, “where is

he? Presently he'll have an affair with me! But tell me where is the wretch?"

"In the hospital—with a sword-thrust in his vitals. He's there for at least six months. If he gets well I shall perhaps meet him again, and I will settle for him at one time, both on Hoche's account and on my own."

"We shall have other use for our swords, Friend Lefebvre," said Hoche, emphatically. "The fatherland, is in danger; we must leave personal rancor—my adversary had calumniated, had insulted me—besides, he had insinuated that I had asked to be sent to the army of the North, so that I might flee; therefore, despite my repugnance, I had to take a sword, and show that cad that he couldn't frighten decent men, and I have given him a lesson that will last him. Now, let us talk of other things, and if the ragout is ready, let us sit down."

"But that wound?" said the mother, anxiously, as she set upon the table a meal from which arose a pleasant odor.

"Bah," said Hoche, lightly, sitting down and unfolding his napkin, "the Austrians and Russians will doubtless give me some more, and one cut more or less will be of no consequence; besides, it is dry now, see!"

And lightly he lifted the handkerchief which bound his head, and showed the wound, which, later, was a deep scar on the martial countenance of the future general of Sambre-et-Meuse.

CHAPTER III.

THE YOUNG LADY OF SAINT-CYR.

THE meal over, Mother Hoche and Catharine got everything ready for little Henriot's departure.

They found his holiday clothes, which were packed into a trunk, and into which the good woman put also boxes of sweetmeats, little cakes and candies.

The child helped greatly, well pleased with these preparations.

Childhood loves change! And wondering at the gold-hilt on Hoche's sword, with which he played, young Henriot began to enjoy the prospect of going away. He saw, already, the joy of travelling. And besides, he said to himself, that where they were going to take him there would be soldiers, very many soldiers, exercising, and that they would surely let him play with the hilts of all their swords, and he would live among them.

He forgot all about the tenderness and the care of good Mother Hoche! Far from being sad, the idea of going away, far away, was anything but disagreeable. Childhood is ungrateful, and its innocence is admirable, yet it goes hand in hand with an all-pervading selfishness, perhaps necessary and most useful, which protects and strengthens the weak creature and makes it

concentrate upon itself its attention, its instinct of self-preservation, and its desire to live.

Hoche and Lefebvre, letting the women go, sat astride their chairs, talking of the revolution which was begun, of the war which was rising at all points on the frontier.

They had gone out of the shop, taking up a position against the fence of the fruit-shop, on the Montreuil road. Glad to be alive, full of the joy of youth, with hopes in their hearts and valor in their eyes, these two heroes, promised to the army of the Republic, sat, after eating Mother Hoche's excellent meal, smoking, laughing and watching the passers-by.

This Montreuil, to-day called the Avenue de Saint-Cloud, was the great highway for foot-passengers from Paris: farmers, soldiers, and villagers.

For the sake of economy, many quiet travellers took the river-boat to la Samaritaine, at the Pont Neuf, and from the Sèvres bridge went a-foot to and from Versailles.

Among the going and coming of these humble people, Lefebvre suddenly espied a thin young man with long hair, whose worn uniform was that of the artillery.

The passer-by, who seemed in a hurry, accompanied a young girl in a black gown who carried a small box in her hand.

Both seemed pensive, as they walked along the road.

Lefebvre, looking at them attentively, suddenly exclaimed, "If I'm not much mistaken, that's Captain Bonaparte "

"Who's Bonaparte?" asked Hoche.

"A good Republican! An excellent artilleryman, and a warm Jacobin," replied Lefebvre. "He is a Corsican, and it seems they took away his commission for his opinions. They are all aristocrats, run by priests, on that island! But I'll go and ask my wife, she knows more about it than I do."

He called Catharine, who came in great surprise.

"What does he want, my husband?" she said, placing her hands on her ample hips, a favorite attitude, of which all her dancing-masters, Despreaux and all, had much trouble in breaking her when she became marchioness and duchess.

"Was not that Captain Bonaparte who passed down the road there, with that young girl," asked Lefebvre.

"Yes, I'd know him in a million, not because he owes me money, either! But I like Captain Bonaparte. What can he be doing with a girl at Versailles! Have you any idea, Lefebvre?"

"Call him, my dear Catharine!"

"Suppose we ask them to stop and refresh themselves, the girl, too! It is warm and the road is dusty!"

Lefebvre, with the consent of Hoche, rose, and ran down the road, and overtook the captain and his companion. He gave them the invitation.

Bonaparte's first movement was to refuse. He was never warm nor thirsty. And besides, he and the girl whom he escorted had no time to lose, as they wanted to take the boat to Sèvres, and it left in an hour.

"Bah! There's another in five hours," said Lefebvre,

"and mademoiselle would perhaps not be sorry to rest a moment," he added, turning to the young girl.

She intimated that she would be glad to have a glass of water.

So Bonaparte followed Lefebvre. They brought out into the street a table and chairs, placing them in the shade, and then out came glasses and bottles of good acid wine, like gooseberry syrup.

They drank to the nation, and Bonaparte, growing cheerful, presented his sister Marie-Anne, better known under the name of Elisa, who was destined to wed Felix Bacceoché, and become successively Princess of Piombino and Lucques, and afterwards Grand Duchess of Tuscany.

Elisa, whose continual ugliness became, like that of her sisters, very trying to Napoleon, and who was always cross amid her greatness, ever anxious to see her little daughters married to kings, was now sixteen years old. She did not dream of her great future nor of its consequent envious traits.

She was a tall girl, dark and slender, with a sallow complexion, long, heavy black hair, very sensual lips, a rather prominent chin, a perfectly oval head, and eyes deep and full of intelligence. Her look was full of pride, and her eye took in disdainfully the plain men with whom she had to sit down before a fruit-shop,

Elisa was one of those young ladies of Saint-Cyr, whose education, conducted on Madame de Maintenon's rules, was paid for by the royal treasury, and who thought herself directly descended from Jupiter.

A decree, on August 16th, had suppressed the educational institute at Saint-Cyr, as a royalist household.

Parents had had to take their daughters away quickly, and the house was soon empty.

Bonaparte, for lack of money, had been slow to take his sister from the deserted convent.

It was necessary that the house should be emptied by September 1st.

On the advice of her brother, Elisa had addressed a letter to the director of Versailles, asking for the sum necessary to send her home.

M. Aubrun, at that time Mayor of Versailles, issued the following certificate : that Mademoiselle Marie-Anne Bonaparte, born January 3, 1777, entered June 22, 1784, as pupil in the school of Saint-Louis, was still there, and needed a sum of three hundred and fifty-two livres to return to Ajaccio, the residence of her family.

By virtue of this authorization, Bonaparte had gone to Versailles that morning to get his sister. He was taking her with him to Paris, to send her to Corsica.

Lefebvre and Hoche congratulated the captain upon having been able to end so nicely this family matter.

Bonaparte told them also that the opportunity for asking his sister's return to her family, had opened the way for him to ask for his re-instatement in the army.

"Then," said Hoche interestedly, "you will be able to rejoin your regiment, too !"

"The minister of war has re-instated me in the 4th

Artillery, with my rank as captain," said Bonaparte, "but I am going to take my sister to Corsica. There, I am authorized to take command of my regiment of volunteers."

"Good luck, comrade," said Hoche, "there may be fighting there too."

"There will be fighting everywhere," was the rejoinder.

"It is a pity that one is not able to kill them on two sides at one time," said Catharine, enthusiastically.

"Ah, if circumstances favor me, my friends," said Bonaparte, emphatically, "I will find you occasions to perish with honor, or to reap commissions, titles, glory, dignities, riches, in the harvest of victory. But excuse us, my sister and me, it is growing late, and we must go on foot to Sèvres."

"And we, before we betake ourselves to deliver Verdun, which the Prussians threaten, must go back to Paris, to take this future soldier," said Catharine, gayly, pointing to little Henriot, who stood dressed, ready to go. The child looked impatiently at these people who delayed and stood around without getting ready and deciding to start out.

"We may meet again, Captain Bonaparte," said Hoche, giving his hand to his colleague.

"On the road to glory," said Lefebvre.

"To get there," added Bonaparte, laughing, "I must get the boat at the Sèvres bridge. Come, Mademoiselle de Saint-Louis," he said, pointing to the horizon, and calling his sister.

The two talked on the road.

"How did you like that captain," asked Bonaparte.

"Captain Lefebvre?"

"No, not he. He's married. His wife is that pretty Catharine—but the other—Lazare Hoche?"

"He's not at all bad!"

"How would you like him for a husband?"

The future grand duchess blushed and made an impatient movement.

"Oh, you don't like him," said her brother, quickly, interpreting as a refusal that slight movement. "It's a pity. Hoche is a good soldier and a man of the future."

"I haven't said that M. Hoche displeases me," said Elisa, "but, my brother, I am rather young to think of marrying, and besides——"

"Besides what?"

"I wouldn't have a man who was not devoted to the king. No, I shall never marry a republican!"

"You are a royalist?"

"Everybody at Saint-Cyr was."

"That's what justifies the decree of closing it," said Bonaparte, smiling. "Why, what aristocrats the young girls become at Saint-Louis! We'll have to re-establish the entire nobility to find husbands for them."

"Why not?" said the proud Elisa.

Bonaparte raised his eyebrows, and did not again allude to his sister's ambitious suggestion.

Elisa's reply did not shock him. But he was disturbed by great visions.

"Then," he thought, "despite her education at Saint-Louis, one could easily find her a husband. These little girls think anything possible! Without dowry, and with brothers who have no standing, ah, it would be very hard!"

Ever haunted by the spectre of family, seeing ever the lamentable vision of his mother, Letizia, surrounded by her large family, before a fireplace ever dark, with a larder often empty, he felt himself growing afraid of the responsibility he had assumed in declaring himself the head of the family.

The future of his three sisters tormented and weighed upon him.

He was anxious to see them settled, and looked about to find husbands for them.

He had met Hoche that day: he need not have been angry with himself for suggesting him to the pupil from Saint-Cyr. True, Hoche was only a captain, but one could predict that he would surely rise.

He murmured, irritably, as he considered his sister's refusal. "There are men who, as captains, wouldn't marry a penniless girl—what has she to risk?"

But, he added, in answer to a secret thought, in his heart, "Captains should marry, if they find a rich, influential, agreeable woman, who can be useful to their relatives, give them position, and a place in the world, but it is not to young girls they should address themselves."

Considering marriage as a means of helping his family from their never-ending want, he would not

have to go far to find in a union, however disproportionate, a refuge against poverty, an instrument of fortune, a step by which he could rise from a miserable captain's rank ; and how easily he could conquer such a position if need be !

CHAPTER IV.

BONAPARTE'S FIRST DEFEAT.

NEXT day, after having secured the money allowed to the young lady from Saint-Cyr to return to her family, Bonaparte went with his sister to Madame Permon.

He wanted to present his sister to her before her departure for Corsica.

Another project led him, at the same time, to his friend's widow.

Madame Permon, mother of the future Duchess of Abrantes, was a Greek by birth, had lived in Corsica, and was still a very handsome woman.

Her coquetry made her deny her age, and, light, frivolous, knowing how to dress, and to move, in a time when luxury was both expensive and dangerous ; surrounded with the pretty trifles of the Louis XV. period, with artistic furniture from that dainty and sensual epoch, she seemed, to the poor young Corsican, a queen of grace and elegance.

He saw her surrounded by all these attractions, and her regal bearing, which had always charmed him, hid

from his poor, but loving gaze, the wrinkles already visible, and the avoirdupois which usually comes with years.

The Permons had, too, a fine fortune. Bonaparte, who in days gone by had often sat with Junot, Marmont, and Bourrienne, at their table, supposed that the widow had a tidy sum still.

These considerations decided him to attempt a double march.

Leaving Elisa with Laure, Madame Permon's elder daughter, he accompanied the lady into a little parlor, and proposed to her to marry her young son.

And when Madame Permon asked curiously to whom he proposed allying her son, he said, "To my sister, Elisa."

"But she is so young," said Madame Permon, "and I know that my son does not now think of marrying."

Bonaparte bit his lip and then answered, "Perhaps my sister, Paulette, who is very pretty, would please him better. And," he added, "that it could easily be arranged to marry Laure Permon to one of his brothers, Louis or Jerome."

"Jerome is younger than Laure," said Madame Permon, laughing. "Really, my dear Napoleon, you are a great priest, to-day—you want to marry all the world, even the children."

Bonaparte affected to laugh, and said, in a rather embarrassed tone, that really the marriage of his family was one of his greatest trials.

Then, catching Madame Permon's hand suddenly, he

imprinted on it two burning kisses, saying that he had decided to begin the union of the two families, his dearest dream, by marrying her, as soon as conventionality, on account of her recent bereavement, would permit.

Stunned, by finding herself the object of this unexpected devotion, she knew not what to do ; she began to laugh in the face of the suppliant.

Bonaparte seemed hurt by her hilarity, but Madame Permon hastened to explain.

"My dear Napoleon," she said, taking a most maternal tone, "let us be serious ; you do not know my age ! Ah, you did not guess at it even. I shall not tell it you, because it is one of my little foibles to hide it ; but I shall tell you that I am old enough to be your mother, or Joseph's, who is your elder brother. Let us leave this nonsense. It hurts me, coming from you."

"I was not playing," said Bonaparte, in a hurt tone, "and I did not know that I asked what was so laughable. I care not for the age of the woman I shall marry. Besides, without flattering you, you seem no older than thirty."

"I'm much older than that."

"I don't care—to me you are young and fair," cried Bonaparte, ardently, "and you are the woman I have dreamed of as a companion."

"And if I do not consent to such folly, what will you do ?"

"I shall seek elsewhere the happiness you refuse me," said Bonaparte, emphatically. "I shall marry,"

he added, after a moment of reflection. "My friends have selected for me a woman as charming as yourself—about your age—whose name and birth are most honorable. I shall marry, I say! Reflect!"

Madame Permon had little to reflect on. Her heart was not her own. She loved secretly a cousin of hers, a great rogue called Stephanopolis. She had introduced him to Bonaparte, and wanted to make him enter the Convention's Guard, which was being formed.

For this fellow, who later died prosaically in stupidly cutting a corn on his foot, she refused the offer of Bonaparte and gained his ill-feeling.

On what threads do destinies hang! Married to Madame Permon, Bonaparte might never have become general-in-chief of the Italian army, might have served unknown in the artillery, going through war without glory.

Bonaparte, in that conversation, had manifested a desire to marry advantageously, to espouse a wealthy woman, who could facilitate his entrance into active life, and open for him the way to great society, now debarred, but which he was ready to enter proudly, though now he saw it but from afar.

The double refusal of Madame Permon was destined to make of the pupil of Saint-Cyr the Princess of Piombino, and the future General Bonaparte the husband of Josephine.

CHAPTER V.

THE SIEGE OF VERDUN.

M. DE LOWENDAAL had hurried to shorten the distance between Crépy-en-Valois and Verdun.

He had gone at once to the Court-house.

Two great interests had combined to carry him to the scene of war, and to come into a city that might at any moment be taken.

It was necessary to collect his money and do it cautiously, for opposite the town of Verdun lay his tobacco-farm.

And another grave care made the baron's coming to Verdun necessary.

He wanted, on the eve of marrying Blanche de Lave-line, to rid himself of a tie now insupportable to him, and to break away from a love of some years standing.

He had met, at Verdun, a young girl of good family, but no fortune, who had come from Angers to enter a convent.

Mademoiselle Herminie de Beaurepaire had not yet taken her vows. She was not yet initiated. She had resigned herself to the taking of the veil, so that her brother might take his place in the world and get a company together.

The Baron de Lowendaal had had no trouble in turning Herminie from the cloister.

Called to Paris by the care which his great wealth required, the baron soon forgot all about poor Herminie.

Intoxicated with a love for Blanche de Laveline, he was more than indifferent to the girl who looked for him with alternating hope and fear, in the sadness of an old-fashioned house with a rich, but invalid old aunt.

Perplexed, the baron asked himself what sort of explanation he could make to her who considered herself his wife—revolving the question from the moment the chaise left the gates of France, on the Châlons road.

He must absolutely cut loose and let Herminie understand that she could count no more upon him.

He crossed the town anxiously, for the strangest and most contradictory stories were afloat; and went directly to the chief attorney, of whom he made his demand.

He said that the finances of Verdun were in such a condition that no payment whatever could be made.

But the magistrate added, taking on a mysterious air, "There is, Monsieur le Baron, one chance for you to reimburse yourself."

"What is it?" asked Lowendaal quickly.

"If we have no money," said the man, "the Emperor of Austria has, and if peace could be maintained, if the horrors of a siege could be spared to this unfortunate town—then, I could answer for your re-imbursement, Monsieur le Baron."

The baron hesitated to reply.

Cosmopolitan, like all financiers, it made little difference to him whether his money came from the French King or the Austrian Emperor.

He was not troubled by patriotic scruples.

He experienced no indignation, on hearing the magistrate suggest his betraying the town to the enemy.

The baron asked if the attorney were exactly informed, if he were sure that the troops of the Prussian King and the Austrian Emperor, masters of Verdun, would be able to guard the town and preserve it against the attack of the volunteers who were coming.

He calculated at once the chances which the proposed bargain presented.

After having reviewed the various chances which the affair presented, he asked about the re-enforcements which were supposed to be coming from Paris to Verdun.

"They will come too late," said the attorney.

"Then, I'm your man," exclaimed the baron.

"Well! You came rapidly from Paris? You spoke to no one?"

"I was really in a great hurry!"

"Have you with you a discreet person, a good boaster?"

"Discreet! Able to keep a secret?"

"And boastful; that is, capable of spreading some apparently improbable reports."

"I have the very man—Leonard, my valet. What must he keep silence about?"

“ Our projects.”

“ He shall not know them.”

“ Then he will surely be silent. The secrets one does not know are easily kept.”

“ And how is he to show himself a talker ? ”

“ On the news from Paris—the city in the hands of brigands—the royal authority ready to descend, at the approach of the Prussian and Austrian armies, and retake the power, and chase off the rebels.”

“ Is that all ? Leonard does not love the *sans-culottes*, and will readily attend to that mission.”

“ Your Leonard might add that he has, from a good source, the news that eighty thousand English are coming to land at Brest and march upon Paris.”

“ And the object of spreading these alarms ? ”

“ To justify our action of to-night.”

“ Where ? ”

“ Here. We are to assemble the principal citizens and dictate the terms of their answer to the Duke of Brunswick. You are ours ? ” he said.

“ You have my promise, as I have yours, for the repayment of my confidence.”

“ Between honest men, Monsieur le Baron, one needs but one word,” and he took his hand.

So the two conspirators parted ; one to send Leonard to spread alarmist reports among the people, the other to cement secret adhesions to his proposed treason.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE MARCH.

ON the way to Verdun, the volunteers of Mayenne-et-Loire were happy, as, accompanied by a detachment of the 13th Light Infantry, in which François Lefebvre served as a lieutenant with captain's orders, they marched and sang.

Enthusiasm sparkled in their eyes, the desire for conquest filled their hearts.

They passed through villages where women stood, their children around them, as in a procession, and the volunteers threw kisses to them. To the men they promised that they would conquer or die. They went, strong, confident, inspiring, to the shrill sound of the fife, and the martial roll of the drum ; the tri-color flapped, with joyous motion, in the wind, and the very soul of patriotism was in their midst.

All, on quitting their native land, had made over their property to their people, declaring that they might already be numbered with the dead.

And these heroes went, with songs on their lips, to die for their country,—a death which seemed for them the fairest, and most desirable.

On the way, to shorten the long marches, they sang

to the music of the Carmagnole, some innocent and jolly lay, like "La Gamelle,"

"My friends, pray can you tell me,
Why all so gay, are we?
Because that meal is best,
That's eaten with a jest.
We mess together always,
Long live the sound!
We mess together always,
Long live the cauldron's sound!"

The refrain was carried along the line and the rear-guard answered—

"Naught of coldness, naught of pride here,
Only friendship maketh high cheer.
Yes, without fraternity,
There is never gayety.
Let us mess together, lads,
Long live the sound!
Let us mess together, lads,
Long live the cauldron's sound!"

As they neared Verdun, whose towers overlooked the wooded plain, the commander, Beaurepaire, called a halt.

He was anxious to observe the surroundings of the place.

The Prussians were not far off; and, after recent events, it was wise to beware of ambuscades.

On an elevation, amid the trees, well shut-in and invisible from the town, the little army encamped

They overlooked a verdant gorge, at whose foot some houses were grouped.

A shepherd, who had followed the soldiers from their meeting near Dombasle, was questioned by Beaurepaire.

He could give no information on the possible movements of the enemy's force.

Beaurepaire hailed the shepherd. He called to him and asked : " Do you know the name of that little village among the trees which the woods hide so well ? "

" Yes, monsieur ; it is Jouy-en-Argonne."

A shudder, quickly repressed, escaped Beaurepaire.

He took his field-glass, and, from far above, looked attentively, eagerly, and with sad eyes, upon the modest village.

He could not take his eyes from it. Some one had said he would find there something of prime importance to him.

There was no trace of an encampment, no sign of bivouac ; nothing to speak of the presence of soldiers appeared in the wooded slope.

Beaurepaire returned, pensive, to the volunteers who had already built fires, and were busy cooking their soup.

While some were getting wood, others brought water from a spring that gurgled out a little above them, and the cooks shelled peas, stolen, in passing, from the fields as they came along ; and they accompanied their culinary operations with another stanza of " La Gamelle."

“ Many crownèd heads, to-day,
Dying, famished far away,
Might envy the way
Of the soldier gay
Who eats our mess to-day.
Long live the cauldron’s sound ! ”

A chariot was stationed at some distance from the cooks. A good old gray horse, unharnessed, browsed the grass peacefully, stretching his neck to nibble the young shoots of the trees, which he found toothsome.

The chariot bore this inscription :

13 Light.
Mme. Catharine Lefebvre,
Cantinière.

Near the chariot a child played, rolling about on the grass ; and, as if seeking safety, came from time to time, to the cantinière, who patted his cheek to reassure him, at the same time attending to her business, for the troopers wanted the canteen opened. Aided by a soldier, she put out a long plank, as a table, on two trestles.

Very soon pitchers, jugs, and a little keg, with glasses and cups, were set on the improvised table.

The canteen was mounted.

The men crowded around.

The road and the songs had made the good-humored troop thirsty.

Soon glasses were filled, and they drank to the success of the battalion of Mayenne-et-Loire, to the deliverance of Verdun, to the triumph of Liberty.

Some had no money, but the cantinière was a good girl, and gave the poor ones credit. They would pay after the victory.

Beaurepaire looked, smiling, upon the lively scene, and his eyes turned again toward the village of Jouyen-Argonne, and he said, anxiously, "I cannot go there; whom could I send? Some one I could trust—a woman were best—but where find such a messenger?"

And he continued to look at the men grouped about Catharine Lefebvre.

Aside, and seemingly indifferent to the joy of the troops at rest, a sergeant and a young man wearing the distinctive insignia of the sanitary corps, talked excitedly, lowering their voices so as not to be overheard.

It was Marcel, who had rejoined Renée the handsome sergeant. He had, thanks to the girl's exertions, obtained, through Robespierre, on Bonaparte's recommendation, his exchange from the 4th Artillery. Sent to the battery, detailed to follow the command of Beaurepaire, he had met the regiment at Sainte-Menchould.

The exigences of the service, the difference of rank, and the place of the aide at the end of the column, had kept the young folks from exchanging confidences and showing their joy at the re-union.

The unexpected halt, called by the commander on the edge of the forest of Hesse, above the village of Jouÿ-en-Argonne, had at last given them the opportunity. They were using it.

Beaurepaire went on, somewhat surprised at the

seeming intimacy between the sergeant and the aide. He waited to learn its causes later, when Lefebvre, happening to pass, said to Marcel :

“ You come from the 4th Artillery ? ” He interrupted the lover's *tête-à-tête*.

“ Yes, lieutenant—in the right wing.”

“ Was Captain Bonaparte, who has been re-instated, with the regiment, when you left ? ”

“ Captain Bonaparte was in Corsica. He had gotten leave, but he wrote to friends in Valence ; so we heard in the regiment. They speak frequently of Captain Bonaparte.”

Beaurepaire, who had listened, came up and said quickly, “ Ah ! where is he ? I trust no ill has happened to him. Can you tell me, Major ? I, too, am one of his friends.”

“ My commander,” said Marcel, “ Captain Bonaparte is well, and now safe, with his family, at Marseilles ; but he was in great danger.”

“ The devil ! Tell me all about it ! My dear Bonaparte ! What happened to him ? ”

“ Pardon me, Commander,” said Lefebvre, “ do you not think, to listen to the major's story, we would be more comfortable seated, and with some refreshment ? My wife will serve it to us ! ”

“ Gladly,” said the commander, sitting down. “ Here's to the health of Madame Lefebvre, the pretty cantinière of the 13th.”

All three clicked glasses, while Lefebvre said to his wife, with a wink,

"Listen to the major's tale! He has news from Corsica about your friend, Captain Bonaparte."

"Are you going to be jealous of poor Bonaparte?" said Catharine shrugging her shoulders. "Has anything dreadful happened to him, Major?"

"He has escaped death by a miracle!"

"Is it possible? Oh, tell me about it quickly, major, with the commander's permission!" said Catharine, sitting down on a tree-trunk, lips parted, ears pricked, impatient for the news of her sometime client.

Marcel went on to tell how the Corsicans, hostile to the Revolution, had desired to give themselves to England. Paoli, the hero of the early years of the independence, had negotiated with the English. He had sought to draw Bonaparte into the defection. The influence of the commander of the National Guard of Ajaccio was necessary to him. But Bonaparte had indignantly refused to participate in his treason.

Paoli, irritated, had incensed the people against him and his. Napoleon and his brothers Joseph and Lucien, were obliged to disguise themselves and flee.

Paoli turned his fury against Bonaparte's mother. The house whither Letizia Bonaparte had fled with her daughters had been assaulted, pillaged, burned. The courageous woman had had to save herself that night, before the dawn.

It was a sad flight. Some devoted friends, under the orders of an energetic vine-grower, named Bastelica, protected the fugitives. The Bonaparte family marched in the centre of an armed force. Letizia led little

Pauline, the future wife of General Leclerc, by the hand ; Elisa, the girl who had just come from Saint-Cyr, from a quiet school, fell upon adventures in the exodus across the mountain, with her uncle Abbè Fesch, whose best days were over ; little Louis played around the column, shouting and asking insistently for a gun. Little Jerome was carried by Savarea, the devoted servant.

They avoided beaten roads. They sought abrupt turnings. They tried to gain the river without being seen by the Paolists.

Trees and stones in the path tore the clothes, hands and faces of the crying children.

After a sleepless and weary night, they came to a torrent. They could not cross it. Happily, they could procure a horse and ford the stream.

They had scarcely crossed when a troop of Paolists, in pursuit of the Bonapartes, passed quickly.

They threw themselves down, repressing even their sighs. Madame Bonaparte quieted the frightened Pauline, who was crying. The horse, too, seeming to divine the danger, stood still, ears pricked, listening.

At last, beside a rock they saw Napoleon, who had come, in a French ship, to take them across the gulf.

Bonaparte hastened to get them on board. Scarcely had he met his people, when a shepherd came running to them. The Paolists had discovered them.

They had just time to embark. The Corsicans, reaching the bank, saluted the fugitives with a fire of musketry, but they were beyond reach.

Once aboard, Bonaparte turned the single cannon of the ship, and discharged upon the Paolists such a devastating fusilade, that eight or ten of them were slain upon the spot. The rest fled. The family was saved !

"Brave Bonaparte !" said Catharine, clapping her hands. "Oh, those dastardly Corsicans ! If I could only have been there with our men, eh, Lefebvre ?"

"Bonaparte was enough," said Lefebvre, "he's a fine cannoneer."

"And a true Frenchman !" added Beaurepaire. "He would not give up his country to an enemy. Can you fancy Bonaparte dying thus on an island, an English prisoner ? It would have been absurd, and his fate is too great for that. Thanks, Major, for your tale ! When we have delivered Verdun, I shall write and congratulate Bonaparte !"

The commander had risen. Having thought the rest sufficient, and seeing nothing suspicious about Verdun, he gave the order to get ready to march. They must be on the way in two hours, to reach Verdun a little before night, using the friendly dusk.

While the men, having eaten their soup and cleaned their muskets, were reforming the column, the commander turned to the now deserted vehicle, and Catharine.

He made a sign to the cantinière, that he wished to speak to her.

In a low voice, he gave his instructions to Catharine, who seemed to hear him with some surprise.

When he had finished, she said, simply, "I under-

stand, Commander ; and when I leave Jouy-en-Argonne, and come to Verdun, what then ? ”

“ Come to us at once if the town is quiet. Wait and follow, if the enemy have moved.”

“ Very well, sir ! I will put on my civil garb. I hope you will be satisfied with me.”

Then she called to Lefebvre, who was wondering what secret mission the commander had thought fit to intrust to his wife.

“ François, I shall see you at Verdun, by the commander’s order. Take good care of Henriot. See that La Violette ”—he was the young soldier detailed to take care of the canteen—“ takes care of the horse going down hill—holds him by the bridle.”

“ He’ll be taken care of,” rejoined Lefebvre. “ But, Catharine, be prudent. If the Prussian cavaliers who fight this battle should take you prisoner ? ”

“ You wretch ! Remember, under my blouse I carry my two watch-dogs,” said Catharine, gayly.

And lifting her skirt, she showed her husband the stocks of two pistols, slipped into the belt where she carried her money.

The volunteers, meantime, at a sign from Beaurepaire, had fallen into line, and were ready to go on their way.

Catharine bravely descended the rapid incline of the gorge, at whose foot lay the little village of Jouy-en-Argonne.

She had reached its first houses, when over wood, field and hill, came the full-voiced song of the volunteers, on their way to Verdun.

Ah ! ça ira ! ça ira ! ça ira !
Little and big we are soldiers at heart !
Ah ! ça ira ! ça ira ! ça ira !
During the battle let no one betray—
Ah ça ira ! ça ira ! ça ira !

And the echo of the valley repeated, “Ça ira ! ça ira !” responding to the martial note of the brave boys going to conquer for their country, and singing under the sacred banner of Liberty.

CHAPTER VII,

THE FORSAKEN.

HERMINIE DE BEAUREPAIRE was in a great wing of the house of Blécourt at Verdun, transformed into an oratory, under the inspiration of her bigoted aunt, Madame de Blécourt.

Two crucifixes and a small improvised altar, on which stood a Virgin Mary, holding in her arms the Infant Jesus, and spreading a robe of blue and an aureole of gilded wood over the scene ; candelabras and two vases of flowers completed the decoration of the chamber, which had been turned into a chapel after the suppression of the religious houses. The pious aunt meant that Herminie should continue to prepare for the conventual life to which she had been destined, so as to be ready when the convents were reopened.

When Lowendaal appeared on the threshold of the oratory, Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire gave a cry of surprise, started, then stopped, looking at him doubtfully, hesitatingly, timidly waiting for a word, a sign, a movement of his lips, a cry from his heart.

The baron stood coldly, somewhat embarrassed, twitching his lips, and not daring to speak.

"Ah, you are come, monsieur," said the young woman, in a tremulous tone. "I thought I should never see you again, so long a time has elapsed since we met in this place for the last time, and then down there, at the village of Jouy-en-Argonne."

"Ah! yes, Jouy! And how is the child? Quite well, I suppose?"

"Your daughter is growing; she is nearly three years old. Ah, would to God the child had never lived!" and Herminie's eyes were suffused with tears.

"Do not cry! Do not be unhappy!" said the baron, without losing his calm indifference. "Look, Herminie, be reasonable. Your tears and sighs may attract attention—all the house is already talking of my coming; do you want them to know that which it is to your interest to hide?"

Herminie raised her head and said proudly, "When I gave myself to you, monsieur, it was my heart alone that spoke—to-day reason dictates my course of action. The hour of madness that made me yield to your embrace is over; I live no longer for love. The flame of the past is extinguished in me. In looking over my life I find now only cinders and ruin. But I have a

child—your daughter Alice—I must live for her, for her sake I must keep up appearances."

"You are quite right! The world is pitiless, my dear Herminie, in cases of little adventures like ours! But we were both, as you say, unreasonable; madness filled our brains; it was an intoxication—we are now fully awakened. But it is always thus; one cannot be all one's life mad and drunk."

And the baron made a gesture indicative of foolishness and cynical disgust.

Herminie advanced toward him, severely, almost tragically.

"Monsieur le Baron, I no longer love you," she said.

"Really, it is a great misfortune for me."

"Do not jest! Oh, I know quite well that you no longer love me. Did you ever love me? I felt for you a moment's distraction—a flash of heart-fire—no, not of the heart—it was rather a sensuous pleasure, a way of using the unemployed hours in a dark, provincial retreat. You had come here on business. The life of gentlemen and soldiers, with their easy pleasures and their wild carousing, seemed to you dull and beneath your dignity; you, a brilliant personage at court, a visitor at Trianon, a friend of the Prince de Robau and the Count de Naibonne. You saw me in my corner, sad, alone, dreaming."

"You were charming, Herminie! You are ever desirable and lovely, but then you had for me an irresistible attraction, a piquancy, a savor."

"I have lost it all now, have I not?"

"No, I protest," said the baron gallantly.

"Do not lie to me. I am changed in your eyes. You see how it is. I told you it would be so. I loved you once, and now I care no longer for you."

"I like it better so," thought the baron. And he added to himself, "Ah, things are going smoothly. The rupture will come without a fuse, without tears and reproaches. It is perfect."

He extended his hand to Herminie.

"We shall be friends, shall we not?" he said.

The young woman stood unmoved, refusing the hand Lowendaal offered.

A curl of her lips showed her disdain.

"Listen to me," she said, in a cold voice. "I was far from thoughts of love here. I was destined to the convent, and I was quite ready to obey them who offered me the cloister as a dignified and worthy retreat for a girl of my position, with a great name and no fortune. Here, with Mademoiselle de Blécourt, I waited for the hour to take my vows. You told me that I would not regret the world, which I had scarce seen, but one glimpse of which (though false) would be gladdening. I had envied those of my companions whose wealth would enable them to marry and go through life with joy in their hearts and pride on their faces, beside husband and children. This happiness was not for me. I was becoming resigned——"

"You were one of those to whom life should have given nothing but joy!"

“And to whom she has given only bitterness. Pardon me, sir, that I remind you of these sad occurrences. But it was then, when my abandonment seemed complete, and when I saw my youth, my desire, my dreams all sacrificed—it was then that you came to me. Did I know what I was doing? Alas, I knew not! Oh, it is of no use to begin recrimination; but to-day, in this interview which is to be decisive for us both, perhaps, let me put one question to you.”

“What? Speak! You are at liberty to put ten, aye, twenty questions! What do you fear? What doubt possesses you?”

“I no longer fear,” said Herminie sadly; “alas, I have forfeited the right to doubt! Monsieur le Baron, you swore to make me your wife; are you come to-day to fulfil your promise?”

“The devil! Now it’s out,” thought the baron; and with a smile that scarce hid a grimace, he murmured, “Your demand staggers me—and, I vow, embarrasses me—I have not forgotten that once, in a moment of madness, as you just called it, I did make that promise. Oh, I do not retract it—but I pray you to remember that I hold for you ever most respectful, ardent, sincere sentiments; yet——”

“Yet you refuse?”

“I did not say so.”

“Then you consent? Look you, answer directly. I have told you that I no longer fear or doubt. I might add that Hope, which once walked by my side has suddenly, at a turn of the road, forsaken me. I await

your answer with the calmness of a heart where all is still—where all is dead.”

“Heavens ! My dear Herminie, you take me at a disadvantage. I did not come to Verdun exactly for the sake of marrying. Weighty matters, interests of prime importance, made my presence here necessary ; and it were a poor time to choose for nuptial joys.”

“Do not speak of joy between us two. So you refuse ?”

“No—but I pray you accord me delay. Wait till peace is established—it will not be long——”

“You think so ? You hope that the cowards and traitors will carry the day, and that Verdun will not defend itself ?”

“I believe that defence is impossible. The artisans, villagers, smiths, and cobblers, will not be able to resist the armies of the king and the emperor.”

“Do not insult the brave men who fight like heroes to rid themselves of traitors and incapable rulers,” said Herminie energetically.

“I insult no one,” said the baron in his insinuating tones. “I simply ask you to consider that the town has no garrison.”

“It will have one, very soon,” murmured she.

“What did you say ?” cried the baron, astonished.

“I say—Look ! Hark !” And Herminie made a sign for the baron to listen.

A confused murmur, cries, and cheers came toward the town.

The joyous sound of drums was mingled with the tread of marching feet.

The baron grew pale.

"What is this uproar?" said he. "Doubtless some uprising. The inhabitants, who insist on opening the gates, and will not listen to the idea of a siege."

"No, that noise is a different one, Monsieur le Baron! Once more, will you hold to your promise and give to our child, to our daughter Alice, the name, the rank, and the fortune which are her due?"

"I have told you, madame, that just now I will not—I cannot do so. Listen—I have important matters to see to—What, the devil! Be patient! I tell you, when peace is established! When the rebels are punished, and when his majesty returns quietly (not to the Tuileries, for the Revolutionists could take it too easily) but to Versailles, then I shall see! I shall decide!"

"Take care, sir! I am a woman who will take vengeance on one who swears falsely!"

"Threats! Well," said the baron, sneering, "I like it best so. They are less dangerous than your tears!"

"I repeat once more, take care! You think me weak, alone, and uninfluential! You may be mistaken."

"And I tell you, madame, that you cannot frighten me!"

"Do you not hear the approaching noise? It is the soldiers that come here!"

"Really! It is strange! Can the Prussians be in the town already?" murmured the baron.

And he listened, with evident inward satisfaction, adding to himself, "They are come in good time, our

friends, the enemy, to cut short this stupid history, and to give me a decent pretext for getting away from this tiresome girl."

"They are not Prussians," said Herminie, triumphantly ; " they are the patriots who have come to help Verdun."

" The re-enforcements they expected ! Why, it cannot be ! Lafayette is with the Austrian powers. Dumouriez is in camp at Maulde. Dillon is bought by the allied forces. Whence, then, can re-enforcements come ? "

" You shall know."

And Herminie, opening the door of her oratory, said to a woman who was in the next room, with two little children, " Come in, madame, and let M. le Baron de Lowendaal know whose drums they are that wake this town ! "

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE VOLUNTEERS.

A FAIR young woman entered.

She gave a military salute and said, looking directly at the baron : " Catharine Lefebvre, cantinière in the 13th, at your service. You want to know the news ? It is the battalion of Mayenne-et-Loire which is making its entry into Verdun, with a company of the 13th, which is under command of my husband, François Lefebvre. Hein ! mademoiselle, it is a fine surprise for the world ! "

The baron murmured, disappointedly, "The battalion of Mayenne-et-Loire ! What is it doing here ? "

"What are we going to do ? " said Catharine. "Why ! Burn out the Prussians, reassure the patriots, trample on the aristos if they dare to move."

"Well told, madame ! " said Herminie. "Now, please name the chief of the volunteers at Mayenne-et-Loire ; it will please monsieur."

"The commander is the brave Beaurepaire."

"Beaurepaire ! " said the baron, frightened.

"Yes, my brother ! who, an hour before his entry into the town, sent me this brave woman to let me know and reassure me," said Herminie, whose pale face was aglow with joy.

"One would imagine this news disconcerted you, little man," said Catharine. Lefebvre, tapping the disconcerted baron familiarly on the shoulder. "You can't be a patriot ! Ah, be careful ; look you for the aristos who wanted to talk of capitulation ; they will have little sport among us ! "

"How many volunteers are there ? " asked the baron solicitously.

"Four hundred, and then there is my husband, Lefebvre's, company. That makes in all five hundred hares who want to stir the town, see ! "

The baron's face had become calm again.

"Five hundred men ! The ill is not so great as I feared ! These five hundred wretches cannot take the town, particularly if the population, now well worked up, demand a capitulation. The worst is the pres-

ence of this Beaurepaire ! How shall I get rid of him ? ”

Herminie, meantime, had been to get one of the two children in the next room.

She brought in a little blonde child, pale and frightened, who tottered on her thin legs, and said, “ Here is your daughter, monsieur, do you not want to kiss her ? ”

Lowendaal, hiding a scowl, turned to the child and kissed her forehead quickly.

The child was afraid and began to cry.

Then entering from the other room, a little lad, wearing a liberty cap with the national cockade, came to the little girl and quieted her, saying, “ Don’t cry ! We’ll go and play, Alice ; they’re going to shoot ! Poûm ! Poûm ! a cannon is such fun ! ”

Catharine Lefebvre looked proudly at him, saying, “ That’s my little Henriot, a future sergeant I am bringing up, while I have as yet none of my own to teach the defence of the Republic.”

Herminie pressed the cantinière’s hand affectionately and said to the baron :

“ This excellent woman is travelling with the regiment. When they reached Jouy-en-Argonne, Commander Beaurepaire called her and asked her to find a certain house in the town, where there was a child he named—he described the house to her—then he asked her to take the child and to apprise me of the arrival of the volunteers, of the presence of a protector for my child’s unfortunate, forsaken mother. That is how your daughter happened to be here, monsieur ! ”

"Then," stammered Lowendaal, "the General Beaurepaire knows——"

"Everything," said Herminie, firmly. "Oh, it was a sad confession; but I had no hope save in my brother, and I knew not how he would receive the sad confidence I gave him that day when, discouraged and weary of everything, I hoped to die."

"And your brother was lenient?" said the baron, trying to seem calm and indifferent, though he was beginning to be much agitated.

"My brother has forgiven me—he has hastened to come and help me—to set me free. The volunteers of Mayenne-et-Loire, enrolled by him, have crossed France at a run——"

"Ah, heaven, what marches they were," exclaimed Catharine. "We were so anxious to arrive in time to help the good town of Verdun; but General Beaurepaire seems to have wings on his feet."

The roll of the drums came nearer. The town seemed joyous. Cries of delight rose loudly on the banks of the Meuse.

"I must go," said the baron. "I am expected at the Court-house."

"And I must meet my husband," said Catharine. "Come, march, young recruit!" she added, taking hold of little Henriot.

The boy resisted. He had kept the little girl's petticoat in his hand, and seemed anxious to stay with her.

"See the dandy," said Sans-Gêne, good-humoredly, "he attaches himself already to the ladies! Ah, he is

a promising boy! March, little one, you shall come again—you shall see your little maid again when we have given the Prussians a necessary thrashing."

"Madame," said Herminie, much moved, "I shall never forget what you have done for me. Tell my brother I bless you and shall come to him. As for this child," she added, pointing to Alice, who smiled at little Henriot as if she, too, wanted him to stay, "if by any misfortune I should be unfit to defend, love, and guard her, see that she gets to my brother."

"Count on me; I have already this little lad to take in my carriage, and that would give me a pair sufficient to make me patient while I wait for the arrival of any of my own. May it not be long," she said, laughing her jolly laugh and laying her hand upon her ample breast. "*Au revoir*, madame, I must go now, my soldiers need me there, and Lefebvre will be astounded not to find me in the ranks."

Taking little Henriot, who had become sulky and cross at being taken so soon from little Alice, Catharine hurried to rejoin the detachment of the 13th, which was encamped in the town.

Herminie, after a frigid bow to the baron, had retreated into the next room with her child, whom she covered with kisses.

Lowendaal went off, sadly, in the direction of the Court-house, saying to himself, "If a capitulation could rid me of this Beaurepaire. But no! that enraged fellow is capable of defending the town and making me marry his sister. Ah! into what a wasp's nest I have run."

And ill-satisfied with the turn of affairs, the baron went to the Court-house, where the notables were already assembled, on the convocation of the President of the Directory, Ternaux, and the Attorney-general Gossin, two traitors, whose names should be kept nailed on a pillory by posterity.

CHAPTER IX.

BRUNSWICK'S MESSENGER.

IN the great hall of the Court-house of Verdun, by the light of torches, sat the members of the districts and the great men.

Commander Bellemond was there, too.

President Ternaux having opened the meeting, Attorney-general Gossin explained the situation.

The Duke of Brunswick had encamped before the gates of the city. Should they be opened to him and should the imperial generalissimo be hailed as a liberator, or should he be shut out, and should cannon-shot answer cannon-shot until the town was laid low? It was fear that suggested the question.

"Gentlemen," said the attorney in a low voice, "our hearts bleed at the idea of the horrors which would result to Verdun from a siege. Gentlemen, resistance against so strong an enemy were madness. Will you receive a person who comes to you with a conciliatory message?"

And the president looked solicitously at the assembly, asking their co-operation.

"Yes, we will," answered several voices.

"I shall then, gentlemen," said the president, "introduce the person who bears the message."

A movement of curiosity was made.

All eyes turned towards the door of the president's office.

It opened quickly, admitting a young man in citizen's costume. He was very pale, and carried his arm in a sling.

He seemed to have been very ill.

"M. the Count de Neipperg, aide-de-camp of General Clerfayt, general-in-chief of the Austrian army," said the president, presenting Brunswick's messenger.

He was none other than the young Austrian whom Catharine had saved, on the morning of the 10th of August.

Scarce well of his wound, under Catharine's excellent care, he had left Paris and reached the Austrian headquarters.

Though still suffering, he had been anxious to enter upon active duty. The memory of Blanche de Laveline caused him keener suffering than his hurt. And, thinking of his child, little Henriot, exposed to all the perils of his strange birth, in the remembrance of Lowendaal's power and the marquis's desire to force Blanche into a marriage which would part them forever, Neipperg felt a slow and exquisite torture. He must forget, and war would leave him little time for sad retrospection. So he was glad to be able to serve once more,

General Clerfayt, appreciating the bravery and tact of Neipperg, had made him his aide-de-camp.

As he spoke French perfectly, the general had chosen him to carry to the great men and the authorities of Verdun the propositions for capitulation.

After saluting the assembly, the young envoy made known Brunswick's conditions : they consisted in the surrender of the town, with its citadel, within twenty-four hours, under penalty of seeing Verdun exposed to a bombardment, and its inhabitants delivered after the assault to the fury of the soldiers.

Amid absolute silence were these hard conditions spoken.

It were well to call one's-self a royalist, as these men would have to do who feared for their property ; and yet it was hard for these rich villagers to hear, without resenting it, such haughty and insulting conditions.

Several of those poltroons would not have been sorry to take part in a brave protestation, though only for form's sake and to save the appearance of honor.

But no word was spoken. No one seemed to dare to call down upon Verdun the anger of the Germans.

Neipperg stood motionless, his eyes dropped. He was inwardly indignant at the cowardice of these merchants, who preferred shame and the dismembering of their country to a resistance which would expose their houses to the play of artillery.

Within himself he thought these could not be the Frenchmen of the 10th of August against whom he had

fought, and who had made the impassioned assault upon the Tuileries.

He had only admiration for the patriots who had wounded him. The heart of a true soldier keeps no ill-feeling after the battle. But the craven fear of these men made him angry, and their shameful silence hurt him.

He wanted to get away, to breathe freely, where he could not see this revolting spectacle of collective cowardice.

His old wound seemed to inflame in contact with these trembling wretches, these arrant traitors.

He looked up and said, coldly ; “ You have heard, gentlemen, the communication of the general ; what answer shall I take to the Duke of Brunswick ? ”

And he waited, paler than at his entrance, his hand laid upon the table for support.

A voice spoke in the general silence : “ Do you think, gentlemen, that in bowing before the merciful sentiments of the Duke of Brunswick you could best make answer ? or shall we let the duke fire upon the town ? ”

It was Lowendaal who spoke.

Neipperg recognized his rival. A flush mounted to his brow.

He made an instinctive movement to step up to the baron and provoke him.

But he reflected—he was an ambassador—he had a mission to fulfil and could not act aggressively now.

Another thought crossed his mind at the same time.

"If the Baron de Lowendaal were in Verdun, was Blanche de Laveline there, too?"

How could he find out? How see and speak to her?

He hoped the baron would unconsciously let him know Blanche's retreat.

He must seem, therefore, to be quiet, and must look and listen.

A quick murmur had followed Lowendaal's words.

"What's he meddling for?" said the men, talking together. "Has he houses, ware-rooms, merchandise in the city? Does he expect to take part in plundering the town? Since resistance is impossible, and the commander knows it, what good would it do to permit a universal massacre and expose our homes and our goods to an artillery fire?"

"Our population is wise; it declines the horrors of a siege," said the president. "The proposition of the Marquis de Lowendaal would strike only an imbecile. Now we have in the town no brawlers; they have all left the city and taken refuge near Thionville; there they met a few of their own kind, and one Billaud-Varennés, who bought them arms. We trust they will never return to Verdun. Gentlemen, are you minded to imitate them? Do you want to be shot down?"

"No! no! No bombardment! We will sign at once!" cried twenty voices.

And the most anxious ones seized pens, and, turning toward the president, asked him to let them sign at once

the acceptance of capitulation which had been prepared in advance before the arrival of the Austrian army.

Neipperg looked in silence upon the meeting, peaceably begun, but which now threatened to become a quarrel.

The Baron de Lowendaal stood aside.

"I might as well not have spoken," he said.

Already the president, pen in hand, sought to maintain his right to sign first, as head of the town, the order of capitulation, when a distant fusilade sounded, and drums were beaten in various quarters, while directly below the windows of the Court-house were heard voices singing the "*Ça ira!*"

CHAPTER X.

BEAUREPAIRE'S OATH.

EVERY one had risen in wild bewilderment.

The least stunned had sought the windows.

The town seemed lighted as for a fête.

In the market-place torches burned, and women and children clapped their hands and formed a fantastic circle around the red light.

It was the volunteers of Mayenne-et-Loire who had sung the "*ça ira*," giving the signal for the uprising of the bewildered town.

There were few men in the crowd ; they stood apart,

seeming to participate only with their eyes in the martial tumult.

The attorney-general spoke to the president.

"Those damned volunteers are making a great noise," said M. Fernaux impatiently.

M. Gossin answered, shrugging his shoulders, "Patience! the Duke of Brunswick will soon rid us of them!" And he added, "I trust those escaped devils will not draw down a bombardment upon us!"

At that moment a red light filled the space, and a flaming bolt fell against one of the houses on the corner, while a loud detonation shook the court-house.

"Ah! I foresaw it!" cried the attorney. "The Prussians are firing our houses! There is the bombardment you asked! Are you satisfied, Baron?"

He had turned to seek Lowendaal, but the latter had disappeared.

Impatient, and anxious to follow him, and believing that Lowendaal had betaken himself to Blanche de Laveline, Neipperg wanted to retire.

"I have no further business here, gentlemen," he said, taking his leave. "The cannon has spoken, so I well may be silent. I shall return to my place. My answer is your powder which has been set to do its fell work."

"Monsieur le Comte," begged the president, "do not go! remain! it is a mistake; all will be explained—arranged——"

"I cannot see how," said Neipperg, with a grim smile. "Listen! The cannon from your ramparts

answer our howitzers. The drum beats in your streets. It seems to me they are coming to the court-house to get shot and to find extra ammunition."

In reality the drum was heard on the stairs of the court-house, and many feet ascended the steps. They heard on the pavement of the vestibule the stocks of the guns.

"Do they dare come here?" cried the exasperated attorney. "Monsieur le Général," he cried to Bellemond, director of the fortifications and of the artillery; "Come quickly; sign an order for the silencing of the drums and the retreat of the men to their quarters which have been assigned to them!"

"Yes, sir," answered the faint-hearted officer, "I shall give orders; in a quarter of an hour Verdun will be quiet——"

"In a quarter of an hour Verdun will be in flames, and we shall chant the Marseillaise to the sound of the cannon!" cried a loud voice behind them.

The door had been pushed open, and Beaurepaire, accompanied by Lefebvre, and surrounded by the soldiers of the 13th and the volunteers of Mayenne-et Loire, terrible as gods of war, burst in among those frightened civilians.

The president attempted to assert his authority.

"Who authorized you, sir, to come and trouble the deliberations of the municipality and the citizens assembled in council?" he asked, in a voice which he in vain endeavored to render firm.

"They say," said Beaurepaire quietly, "that you are

scheming here for an infamous act of treason ; that you talk of rendering up the city ! Is it true, citizens ? Speak ! ”

“ We do not need to apprise you, General, of the resolutions of the authorities ; go back with your men, and stop this firing which you have ordered without permission of the council for the defence,” exclaimed the president, feeling himself upheld by his associates.

Beaurepaire reflected a moment, then taking off his hat said, respectfully :

“ Gentlemen, it is true, I did not wait for orders from the council for the defence, to fire upon the Prussians, who already surround the gates and are prepared to enter at the first signal—a signal they seem to expect from here. I have barricaded the gates ; my good friend, Lefebvre, here, has placed his look-outs on both sides of every palisade, and the enemy has retired. At the same time, to keep them from seeing too closely what we are doing on the ramparts, I have sent a few balls among them which have made the Austrians keep back ; they were too anxious to pay us a visit. I had just arrived with my men when I learned the state of things, and I vow I never thought of considering the advice of a defensive council.”

“ You were wrong, Commander,” said the artillery director, Bellemond.

“ Comrade,” said the general, “ that is my business. I shall answer, if need be, for my conduct to the representatives of the people, who will soon be here. I respect the Commune of Verdun and her civil officers.

I trust they are patriots, ready to do their duty. I shall take their orders for all that concerns the interior service and the political measures. I know the obedience soldiers owe to the representatives of the people. But for that which regards me as a soldier, and the fire of the howitzers I direct against the Prussians, you must let me, comrade, do as I will. Take that as your answer. I am here as your equal, and we have but to act together to repulse the enemy and save the town."

These words, uttered in a strong voice, impressed Bellemond, a subaltern but lately promoted, and who would have acted bravely had he not been dominated by the president and the attorney.

"But," he suggested, "since such council exists, should you not consult them before beginning a battle?"

"When the enemy is at the gates, and when the soldiers within the town hesitate, the council for defence, when consulted, could give no other order to the head of the troops than to bar the way, place his men on the ramparts, open his guns upon the approaching enemy, and fire! That is what I have done, comrade! just as if I had had time to consult the council over which you preside. But, really, could there have been other advice? Could they have given me a different order? All they can reproach me with is not having opened fire quickly enough. But the ammunition was wanting. There it is! Listen! Ah, it grows warm!"

Louder and louder reports followed Beaurepaire's

words. It was from the direction of Porte Saint-Victor that they came.

The men trembled. Many feared for their houses, for surely the Prussians and Austrians would answer that furious cannonade by a rain of shot.

"Great heaven ! there's a brave man," thought Neipperg, watching the open countenance of Beaurepaire. "A look at him makes up for this shameful sight."

And he advanced to him politely, saying, "General, I dare not leave you in ignorance as to who I am—the Count de Neipperg, aide-de-camp of General Clerfayt."

"In civilian's garb ?" Beaurepaire looked sternly at the man who thus came to him.

"I did not come here to speak, General, but was simply charged to deliver a message to the town of Verdun and its defensive council, from the generalissimo."

"Doubtless a demand to capitulate !"

"You are correct, sir."

"What did they answer here ?"

Beaurepaire threw an accusing glance upon the men and the municipal officers, who lowered their eyes and turned their heads.

Gossin whispered to the president, "If this agent of Brunswick tells all, that confounded Beaurepaire is quite capable of having his brigands shoot us, my poor Ternaux."

"I fear so, my friend Gossin," rejoined the president, sadly.

Neipperg, however, said quietly, "I have not yet

had time to receive the reply of these gentlemen. You, yourself, took charge of the answer to the generalissimo."

This frankness pleased Beaurepaire, who said presently, "So, sir, your mission is ended. Will you permit me to conduct you, personally, to the outposts?"

"I am at your command, General."

Beaurepaire, before leaving the hall, turned a last time to the president and the attorney-general, saying to them:

"Gentlemen of the Commune, I have sworn to my men to die with them amid the ruins of Verdun rather than render up the town. I trust you are of my opinion?"

"But, General, if the entire town wanted to capitulate? If the inhabitants refused to permit themselves to be besieged? What would you decide? Would you continue, despite the wishes of the populace, your murderous fire?" asked the president. "Well, what would you do? We await your reply."

Beaurepaire waited a moment, and then said, "Should you force me to give up the town, mark me well, sirs, rather than submit to such shame and such treason against my oath, I will kill myself! I have sworn to defend Verdun to the death!"

He went toward the door, returned abruptly, and rapping the table with his hand cried, "Yes, to the death! To the death!" and he left, followed by Neiperg, leaving the council in terror.

"He'd kill himself! Faith, it would be a fine thing,

and a comfort for everybody," thought Lowendaal, who had just entered noiselessly into the council chamber.

They questioned him as to the doings in the town.

"They are firing from various quarters," he said, with his cynical smile. "The volunteers fly to the ramparts like deer. Several of them have been struck down. Ah! those fanatics of the 13th; among them is a female demon; they tell me she is the wife of Captain Lefebvre, a cantinière, who goes and comes, carries ammunition, stands beside the cannon, pulls the lighted cotton from the Prussian bombs which fall upon the slopes. I actually think she has fired the guns of the fallen soldiers about her, and has not retired until every shot was spent. Happily, there are few soldiers like this Amazon, or the Austrians could never enter here!"

"Do you still hope for it, Baron?" said the president.

"More than ever. This siege was necessary, as I told you! The inhabitants were not sufficiently impressed. My servant, the faithful Leonard, had to tell many stories, beside my instructions, and yet they were not convinced. They hesitated to accept the capitulation. By to-morrow morning they will demand it."

"You restore our confidence!"

"I tell you, President, they will force you to sign the capitulation."

"Heaven grant it," sighed the president, "but the Duke of Brunswick's envoy has returned to his quarters. How shall we cause his return? He had the papers."

"It will do if some trusted messenger will go to the Austrian camp, and carry your duplicate, with the assurance that to-morrow the gates will be open to the generalissimo."

"Who will undertake such a mission?"

"I," said Lowendaal.

"Ah, you will save us," cried the president, who, rising in an ecstasy of joy, embraced him as if he were a herald announcing a victory.

CHAPTER XI.

LEONARD'S MISSION.

SOME moments later, Lowendaal, with the duplicate letter of capitulation, left the court-house, and joined Leonard, who was waiting for him.

In a low voice, though no one was near, the baron gave him a detailed order.

Leonard seemed surprised, showing, however, that he understood the task which was being given him; but, at the same time, seeming somewhat embarrassed if not frightened, he repeated his master's instructions twice over.

The latter said, severely, "Do you hesitate, Master Leonard? You know that, although we are in a besieged town, there are prisons, and police to take there those who—like a certain person I know—who coun-

terfeited the seal of the State and gave to the employés of aides and magazines false receipts."

"Alas, I know it, Baron," said Leonard, in a submissive tone.

"If you know it, do not forget!" rejoined the baron. "I am sorry, Leonard, to be obliged to remind so devoted a servant as yourself, that I saved him from the gallows!"

"And that you can send me back there! Oh, sir, I shall remember it!"

"Then you will obey?"

"Yes, sir! But remember it is serious; it is a terrible thing you ask me to do!"

"You exaggerate the importance of this matter and ignore the confidence I choose to repose in you! By heaven, Leonard, I am used to more docility, more devotion, from you! You are growing ungrateful! To forget benefits is a dreadful fault!"

"Oh, monsieur, I shall be eternally grateful to you," wept the wretch whom Lowendaal had found stealing from farms with the aid of false stamps. "I am ready to follow and to obey wherever you choose to take or to send me. But what you order now is——"

"Abominable! You have raised scruples, Master Leonard," sneered the baron.

"I should not dare find abominable any task M. le Baron set me. I wanted to say——"

"Well, your idea was? I am curious to know your opinion."

"Oh, sir—the—thing—is dangerous—oh—not for any

but myself," he hastened to add. "For should I be taken, they will roast me alive and not get your name, as having ordered the task."

"Even then, none would believe you," said the baron, dryly, "you have no proof of such an order from me. Besides, to reassure you, let me say, I have made provision for your retreat should you be discovered; but it is not probable."

"Really?" said Leonard, much pleased.

"My post-chaise will await you on the Commercy road, near the Porte-Neuve. There is no fighting on that side."

"But how shall I pass through?"

"As on a mission from the council for defence. Take this passport and return to me to-morrow at day-break, in the Duke of Brunswick's camp."

Here Lowendaal gave Leonard a town passport.

"I shall obey," said Leonard.

"Be careful not to do your business so ill as to be captured by Beaurepaire's enraged volunteers. If you should be arrested, I could no longer hide your history. Then, there would be the gallows. Or, perhaps, immediate death as a spy."

Leonard shivered. "I shall be careful, monsieur," he said.

"Very well; you understand! Go! and in the emigrant's camp I shall await your news."

"I shall do my best, sir. It is all one to me; yet you ask me to do a very onerous thing, and I fear the chaise will wait in vain at Porte-Neuve."

“ Imbecile ! In a town besieged on all sides, where everything is in flames, surveillance is impossible. Remember, I count on you, Master Leonard. If you play me false, or if you grow weak, you may rest assured that, as soon as I re-enter Verdun, my first call will be the court, and my second to find the functionary charged with taking care of the galley-slaves, and seeing to the departure of the next crew for Toulon. Adieu, Master Leonard, until to-morrow, at dawn.”

And Lowendaal went quickly toward the Porte-Neuve, while Leonard, perplexed, meditating on the fulfilment of his mission, said to himself :

“ How shall I penetrate, without arousing suspicion, into the house of Madame de Blécourt ? How reach General Beaurepaire in the dead of night, alone and unarmed ? ”

CHAPTER XII.

THE EMIGRANT CAMP.

LOWENDAAL, on leaving Leonard, murmured, with a self-satisfied air : “ That fool will do just as I told him ; he is a little afraid ; but his fear of the galleys will be greater than his terror of Beaurepaire’s sword. To place a man between two such startling alternatives—to be sent to the galleys, or to risk being sent there if captured—any sensible man—and Leonard is no dolt—would choose the risk. First he will go and try

to escape ; then he will go a little unwillingly and uncertainly—but go he will finally. Do not soldiers act so, too? When they are sent to the cannon's mouth, it is not always love of glory that urges them, but the fear also of being shot if they prove cowardly. To be good soldiers they must keep with the body of troops. The punishment, falling upon many heads, attains no one specially. Leonard is alone—he dare not turn back—and like the good Talthibius, the herald in the palace of Atrides, I shall hope soon to see, from the emigrants' camp, the expected signal." The baron smiled complacently, having no scruples on the subject, and loving to show his literary knowledge and his erudition in the matter of great authors.

He strolled on through the night, through the deserted quarters of the town, hearing the distant shots, and following with careless eyes the luminous track of the shells, which, like swift meteors, crossed the black background of the sky.

There was no fighting around him.

Some few functionaries, awake upon the ramparts, gave their call : "Sentinels, keep your watch," at intervals, in the silence, which, otherwise remained unbroken about the Porte-Neuve, whither the baron went.

He found, several of the National Guards on duty there, to whom, after his departure from the courthouse, the attorney-general had sent an order to pass the Baron de Lowendaal. The head of the post readily, unbarred the door to let the baron out, and wished him a safe return.

Going eastward across the deserted field, the baron reached a woodland whose slim trees rose on its edge, and proceeded directly toward a fire which burned at some distance across the plain—a bivouac of the outpost, doubtless.

A cry of, "Who goes?" uttered in French made him stop.

"I was not mistaken," thought he: "these are Frenchmen."

He stood still, calling out: "A friend: sent by the municipality of Verdun."

A silence followed; then he saw a dark object rise, accompanied by a click of arms.

A light came toward him.

Four men, with the lantern-bearer, came to look at him.

After having declined to do business with the captain of the division, and having asked to be taken to the general-in-chief, the baron was politely invited to a place beside the fire, while he awaited the general's orders.

The invitation he accepted gladly, for it was a chilly night. He sat down among the royalist volunteers, before the burning logs.

His arrival had been whispered through the camp, and many sleepers awoke to hear the news, and to learn what was going on at Verdun.

This camp of emigrants was strange and varied. The army of Condé was composed of volunteers from all parts of France, but principally from the west;

they came to fight against the national army, to defend the white flag, and to reoinstate the king and crush the Revolution. Many had come somewhat unwillingly.

Some were urged to it by their families, or fired by others' example, or unable to remain upon their ruined and plundered estates.

Some came from pure fanaticism, and many in the hope of re-entering France with both triumph and profit.

This army of rebels and traitors was collected from various provinces. The gentlemen among them conserved their privileges, and concealed their infatuation. They did not mingle with the rest. Bretagne had sent seven companies of nobles—an eighth was in reserve. The costumes, too, partook of the class distinctions. The non-nobles wore an iron-gray garb ; the gentlemen had uniforms of royal blue, with cocked hats. Thus these insurgents, against the will of the nation, assembled for the same cause and running the same risks, attempted to keep alive, in their midst, the adherence to hierarchies and the social distinctions which were already a thing of the past. The townsmen, with their sombre coats of gray were far more self-denying and devoted than the nobles, for they fought for privileges in which they could never share.

Some deserters, still wearing the uniforms of their division—they were mostly marine officers—formed the only really military element of the organization.

The marine corps, brave, but superstitious, yet much attached to royalty, had been mustered chiefly from

the sons of families on the Breton coast, and all hostile to the Revolution. The desertion of these marines enfeebled the naval strength of the nation for a long time, and despite the courage of the sailors, gave England victories over French ships and strengthened her supremacy on the high seas. The treason of these royalist marine officers is too often overlooked, when one counts the rigorous measures taken by the Convention in the west.

The heroic resistance of fanaticism was less detrimental to the country than the flight of these experienced marines—comrades of La Pérouse and D'Estaing, the glorious adversaries of the English in the American Revolution who quitted the bridges of their ships to run behind Prussian generals, and allow themselves to be shot by the National Guards.

These royal volunteers were poorly clad, poorly armed, and poorly provisioned besides. Their guns, of German manufacture, were clumsy and heavy.

Many of the nobles had only hunting arms.

The combination of this strange army made it seem like a troop of insurgent Bohemians. Even the ages were mixed. Old squires, bent and broken with years, advanced side by side with young fellows. Entire families, from grandsire to grandson, were together in the ranks. It was touching and at the same time grotesque.

The army of the princes had been deprived of artillery, and despite the individual courage displayed by most of these improvised soldiers, their attachment to

the royal cause was little assistance. The Prussians and Austrians were not wrong in considering most of these gentlemen only an incumbrance.

The Baron de Lowendaal listened, with his satirical smile, to the confidences, boasts, and recriminations of the volunteers.

They overwhelmed him with questions as to the condition of Paris, when he had left it, and as to the favorable possibilities for the king's return.

The baron answered evasively, saying that, in his opinion, all would arrange itself, although one must naturally calculate upon the over-excitement of crowds, and the ardor with which men had hastened to enlist as soon as the country was considered in danger.

The young gentlemen heard, with haughty sneers, the careful answers of the baron who, on his side, learning the hour at which the general would be ready to receive him, seemed anxious to get his mission fulfilled.

While telling his irritable auditors all he knew about the preparations of the entire nation, and their readiness to die, if need be, the baron kept one eye open beyond the camp-fire, toward the ramparts of Verdun, on the Porte-Saint-Victor's side.

He seemed to wait from minute to minute for a signal which, however, did not come.

At times he drew out his watch, consulted it anxiously, hearing but indifferently the talk around him; then he glanced at the sky, ever dark above the town.

"What is that dolt, Leonard, doing?" he thought, "Can he have betrayed me? Can his courage have

failed at the last moment? Oh, I shall take fearful vengeance on him. If he has deceived me, I shall surely see him sent to the galleys."

And the baron, not caring to listen longer to the talk of the volunteers, feigned to fall asleep, closed his eyes, and lay, wrapped in his cloak, beside the embers of the fire, where some one came to tell him that General Clerfayt awaited him in his tent.

The baron rose and followed his guide ; not, however, without casting uneasy glances at the houses of Verdun, which showed, from the high grounds, above the ramparts. Plunged in shadow as well as in slumber, these houses seemed indifferent to the cannonade which continued on the opposite side of the town ; it had grown less and less ; the Prussians answered but moderately to the shots of the besieged. Providing for a siege which might, nay, which must, be long, they husbanded their ammunition well.

In the general's tent, the baron found the aide-de-camp who had been at the court-house.

He scowled, though he saluted, with scrupulous politeness, the Count de Neipperg.

The latter returned his salutation icily.

The interview was short.

The Austrian general asked what was the attitude of the town of Verdun.

And when the baron assured him that it was excellent, and favorable to surrender, the general answered by a silent movement, lifting the canvas of his tent and showing the flaming shells flying over the ramparts.

The baron mechanically followed, with his eyes, the general's motion.

Although he was master of himself on all occasions, he could not repress a quick exclamation of triumph and content.

He saw, in the northern quarter of the town, a flaming color. Jets of flame shot through volumes of smoke in that part of Verdun, which seemed to have been spared until then by the besiegers.

"What is it?" demanded the general, surprised at this extraordinary emotion on the part of the city's messenger.

"Nothing, General—nothing at all—weariness and care—and the joy I feel in knowing that to-morrow the horrors of the siege will be over for that fair city. That is the explanation of my cry at seeing the shells and flaming shot flying through space," said he, forcing himself to be calm outwardly.

"Then you believe," said Clerfayt, "that the city will open her gates to-morrow?"

"I'm sure of it, sir. A man is to come to me this very morning with the deed of capitulation signed."

"Why did you not bring it yourself? Why did you not send it with my aide-de-camp, the Count de Neipperg here, who went, charged by myself and by the Duke of Brunswick to bring your answer?"

"I was not certain, General, that the town would be in a state to surrender to-morrow morning."

"Ah! what was the obstacle?"

"A wretch—a brigand-chief, General Beaurepaire—

entered last night by surprise into the town and wanted to overthrow our plans, ruin all our hopes."

"This general is a brave soldier, and an able adversary," said Neipperg to Clerfayt.

"You have seen him?" said Clerfayt, interested.

"Yes, and heard him speak. You should see him—it is he who has put Verdun so rapidly in a state of defence. While he is about, I am not of monsieur's opinion,—Verdun will not surrender."

And Neipperg cast a look of scorn at the baron.

"What have you to say?" said Clerfayt. "You promise me the opening of the gates to-morrow morning. My aide-de-camp, who has seen the place and knows the energy of its defender, says it will not yield so readily. Answer me!"

"Pardon me, sir," said the baron in his honeyed tones, "I do not contradict the aide-de-camp. I made you aware of that obstacle. I told you what caused my hesitation, my fears. I was not sure, as I told you, that Verdun would surrender."

"And now you believe surrender possible?"

"Certain, sir."

"But—Beaurepaire?"

"Beaurepaire, sir, is dead!"

"Dead! How do you know? Who told you?"

The baron bowed, and with a broader smile than usual said, "Sir, permit me to get the official confirmation of that news whose first messenger I am. The man who shall bring me the signed deed of surrender will tell you the end of General Beaurepaire."

"Very well, sir, we shall wait," said Clerfayt coldly, signing to the baron that the interview was over.

When Lowendaal left, the Count de Neipperg said to the Austrian general, "How does that spying fellow, squinting from under his light and smiling mask, know that Beaurepaire is no more? He was living not two hours since when I left Verdun! Can they have murdered him?"

Clerfayt regarded his aide with some surprise. He said, "My dear Neipperg, we soldiers make war loyally and by daylight; but these merchants who hold out their hands to us, and open the gates of their town, are capable of any cowardice. There are ill things left over in the kitchen of victory. They who partake of the feast must not trouble to think how it is prepared. Otherwise none would care for—none would kill for glory. Let us get our message ready, dear lad, for by morning, if this baron speak the truth, we will have enough to do; a town to occupy, posts to guard, authorities to change and to look after, without counting the triumphal entry of their majesties amid the felicitation and homage of the people. At least we will see if this Lowendaal spoke truth. We will send messengers to this Beaurepaire, who seems to be a hard adversary."

And while Neipperg sat down at the little table to write at the general's dictation, the latter, lifting the opening of his tent, called to one of the artillery officers beside a battery: "Commander, continue your fire upon the ramparts of Verdun until you see raised the flag of truce."

CHAPTER XIII.

CATHARINE ALARMED.

LEONARD, as we have seen, left his master, and, perplexed and discomfited by the remembrance of a disagreeable past, made his way to the Porte de France.

On that side the cannon roared constantly, and Leonard did not love its music over-well. But he had received exact orders and he felt he must execute them.

Where they were fighting, he hoped to find the man he sought and concerning whom he had received orders—this was General Beaurepaire.

Before gaining the side of the gate, where, on the slope, stood several officers, and doubtless, too, he whom the mission concerned, Leonard sauntered toward a wagon about which were groups of men, and before which was a table with bottles, glasses, pieces of bread and sausages.

It was the canteen of the 13th Light Infantry.

Behind the table, which was lighted by two smoking torches, stood Catharine Lefebvre, alert, jolly, and ready to serve drink and refreshment, answering to the repeated demands of the cannoneers and the soldiers who came between shots to drink to the deliverance of Verdun.

From time to time Catharine stopped pouring wine, or cutting slices of sausage, to glance into her wagon.

There, on a tiny bed, little Henriot slept the dreamless sleep of childhood.

"Ah, the cannon lulls him like a cradle-song," said she, and Catharine returned to her distribution not without a few words of energetic defiance of the Prussians.

From the outset of the siege, Beaurepaire had moved actively about, seeming to be everywhere at once ; he had gone to the batteries, encouraged the gunners, seeing to the placing of gabions, and guarding the turrets of the *Porte de France* ; while Catharine, leaving her canteen, had also climbed the slopes.

There, like a fury of war, she had shamed the laggards, encouraged the brave, helped the first wounded men, and even, at times, seized a gun and discharged it upon the Austrian cavaliers who had advanced under the embrasures of the gates ; she had contributed energetically to keeping off a panic and holding back the enemy, who were surprised at so sturdy an extemporized defence. Beaurepaire noticed and praised her.

The attack over, the enemy retired, having given up the idea of taking a town so well guarded ; and Catharine returned to her canteen and her neglected customers.

She had, in a lull after the first combat, seen Lefebvre, who, with his sharp-shooters, guarded the parapets, and, from the walls, poured a deadly fire on the Austrian infantry.

Reassured and happy—for this was her baptism of fire—she had returned to her canteen, where she

worked with good-humor and much acceptance by the troop.

While she was serving two artillerymen, she noticed, a little at one side, a civilian who watched them drinking.

"Eh ! my friend," she said unceremoniously, "why don't you come and take a good cup of 'schuick,' as we say ? You are a civilian, but, never mind ; to-morrow you'll be like the rest—in arms. Come ! you may drink with the defenders of your country. We're all brothers !"

And as the man did not answer, and was about to move away she called :

"Eh, friend, do not go off that way ! Have you no money ? Never mind, I shall regale you to-day, to-morrow you can pay me. What will you have ?"

The man answered dryly, "I do not drink."

"You are not thirsty, and you do not fight ? Then, what do you want here ?"

The man hesitated, then said in a low voice, "I wanted to speak to General Beaurepaire."

Catharine looked surprised.

You ? speak to the general ? What do you want with him ?"

"I have important news to tell him."

Catharine shrugged her shoulders. "You choose a fine time, my lad."

"I choose the moment I can get."

"Possibly, but just now you can't see him."

The man shook his head, and said, "But I must see him."

Catharine distrusted her interlocutor. His insistence was suspicious. She determined to tell her husband.

She signalled to one of the soldiers and told him to find Lefebvre, and ask him when Beaurepaire could be seen.

Excited by the noise of battle, his tongue loosened by copious draughts taken with a man in town, the soldier grew garrulous. He told, despite Catharine's warning glances, that Beaurepaire had gone to sleep for a little at a relative's house in town; and at four o'clock would be up again, and had ordered his horse for that hour.

Catharine, losing patience, said, "You chatter like a magpie—go somewhere and sleep—it will do you good. You'll never be ready to meet the general at four o'clock, as he told you to do. Go, or I'll call Lieutenant Lefebvre; he doesn't play with babblers and drunkards."

"Very well; I'll keep still and go," growled the soldier, and went away.

Catharine turned once more to serve her soldiers.

Mechanically she looked for the man who had insisted on speaking to the general.

He was gone.

Catharine thought she saw him going off in company with the orderly, toward a tavern whose doors stood open to the men who wanted to help, to defend and to shelter the town.

She had a moment's suspicion that this man was a conspirator and that some danger threatened Beaurepaire.

She wanted to follow him and to point him out to Lefebvre, but could not think of leaving her canteen just then.

The defenders of Verdun, passing the night in erecting defences, raising palisades, and setting cannon in position amid a continuous fire, must find her ready to wait upon them.

She shuddered uneasily, though trying to persuade herself that she was unnecessarily alarmed and that no harm could come to Beaurepaire from this man. But Lowendaal, came, ever and again, into her mind.

The baron looked like a traitor. Could he have planned aught against the valiant defender of Verdun?

At last, Catharine could endure her anxiety no longer ; and when, as the night advanced, the customers became few, she said briefly that she must get a little sleep, and sent away the last few soldiers, saying that, if they did not feel the need of rest, they could find amusement on the ramparts, where there were a few men trying to place gabions and set guns.

CHAPTER XIV,

A HERO'S END.

AFTER arranging her canteen, and giving a quick kiss to Henriot, who slept peacefully, Catharine went out into the dark streets.

Her fears were aroused, It must be in the house of

Madame de Blécourt, whither he had ordered her to take the little girl from Jouy-en-Argonne, that danger threatened Beaurepaire. She divined sorrow, she scented treason.

As she approached Madame Blécourt's house, she heard a shot.

It was not a surprising noise in a besieged city.

But that shot, in that isolated quarter, far from the ramparts, and seemingly asleep, was frightful.

She was sure of misfortune, crime.

At the turn of the lane she saw the shadow of a fleeing man.

She seemed to recognize that strange person whose looks at the canteen had aroused her suspicions.

She called to him—"Say! Man! Don't go so fast! Who fired that shot?"

But the fugitive redoubled his haste, and answered not; turning, he disappeared down a dark street.

Catharine hesitated an instant. Should she follow him? But she reflected that a man hurrying by night through a besieged city was not necessarily a culprit, and, besides, what connection could there be between this unknown man and Beaurepaire? It was not there that the danger lay, if Beaurepaire was threatened.

She must go to the Blécourt house, and assure herself that the general was asleep and safe.

Catharine started again, and walked rapidly toward the house, where Herminie de Beaurepaire must be sleeping, with little Alice by her side, and where, doubt-

less, Beaurepaire, worn with fatigue, had thrown himself upon a bed, until he should be called to return to the strife.

As she reached the door and knocked, cries and calls arose from within.

Frightened people put out their heads, calling for help.

In night-cap and gown, the old dowager of Blécourt appeared upon the balcony, waving her arms wildly, despairingly.

At the same time a red light sent its sinister glow over the opposite house.

Clouds of black smoke poured from the open windows.

Great tongues of flames licked upward toward the roof.

"Fire ! Fire !" cried Catharine, "and the door will not give way."

Servants, losing their heads, ran screaming downstairs, calling for keys. Finally, they opened the door and rushed into the street.

Some neighbors, awakened by the noise, came up. But the courageous Catharine was already in the burning house.

The danger did not frighten her, and she told herself that there were lives to be saved.

She mounted the stairs through the smoke, guiding herself by the glare of the flames.

One room, on the first story, had its door open—she cried aloud !

"Is any one asleep here ? save yourself, quickly !"

The smoke kept her out.

No answer came !

A glare of flame suddenly flashed through the gloom and lighted the chamber.

Catharine uttered a cry of terror, There upon the bed lay Beaurepaire asleep, lifeless, deaf to the mighty tumult.

She rushed to him.

"General—quick—awake ! Get up—the house is on fire !" she cried.

He did not move.

The room was dark once more.

The smoke rolled in, thick, suffocating.

Catharine bent over, putting out her hands.

She tried in that smoky darkness to find the bed.

She wanted to help the general, thinking—"Can he have fainted ?"

She touched the lifeless body ; she listened. No sound of breathing came from the bed.

"What a strangely deep sleep," she thought—and terror filled her strong, manly heart.

Nevertheless, she approached ; and laid her ear upon the general's breast.

"His heart has ceased to beat," she murmured, with a tone of intense agony.

A terrible silence seemed to fill the room.

She laid her hand upon his forehead and felt something thick, and sticky, on her fingers.

Frightened, she recoiled.

She felt stunned, weak, sick—she almost fell.

He was dead—dead.

She roused herself.

“ Ah, the window,” she thought, astonished that she had not sooner thought of opening it.

She went quickly, and let in the air.

It was high time. A moment more, and she would have fallen, choked by the smoke.

The roar of the flames continued, and lit up once more the bed where Beaurepaire lay.

The general seemed asleep, rigid, insensible. His face was livid, his pillow red.

A gap in his temple, whence flowed a stream of blood, revealed how deep was the slumber that held the heroic dead.

“ Ah, the wretches, they have murdered him ! ” cried Catharine, rushing from the room. She shouted an alarm which no one heard in the general confusion, and which was lost amid the horrors of the flames.

As she sought the stairs where lay the débris of stone, plaster, and wood-work, half-burned and sending up sparks and black smoke, she heard a soft voice singing in a plaintive tone,

Sleep, sleep,
Baby sleep,
Baby's sleep is long and deep.

Stunned, Catharine tried to find out whence this unexpected song came. What deaf old nurse could rock her charge with this soft lullaby amid the horrors of that night !

The voice came from the story above. Braving the flames which might at any moment attack the stairs behind her, and cut off her retreat, Catharine went up through the smoke.

She opened the door whence came the soft voice, singing, ever in the same tone, that simple cradle-song.

She saw, insensible, with vacant stare, and bent head, Herminie de Beaurepaire, sitting on the side of a bed, and holding in her lap little Alice, who was fast asleep.

"Come quickly, madame," cried Catharine. "The house is afire !"

But Herminie continued to sing and rock little Alice.

At Catharine's cry, the child awoke.

"There is no time to lose. Come ! Quick !" cried Catherine, imperatively, and she took the trembling child by the hand.

Herminie, bowed gravely, and said, "Good-day, madame ! Do you not know ? I am to be married ! You are come to my wedding, are you not ? Shall I not look well ?"

"She is mad ! Poor girl," thought Catharine, pityingly ; "but I must not think of that now ! Come, you must follow me !" she said, giving a harsh tone to her voice purposely.

The mad-woman rose, her eyes fixed, her arms hanging by her sides, and moved automatically.

Catharine, taking little Alice, hurried to descend. She turned to see if Herminie were coming. The latter continued to walk stiffly.

As she passed the room where Beaurepaire lay, Herminie threw up her hands, gave a scream, and cried :

"He is there ! there ! The man ! with a pistol at his temple ! He will kill me, too !"

And she sank senseless across the doorway.

Catharine could not carry her. She must attend to the child.

She hurried on with little Alice and rushed into the street.

She had saved the child.

The soldiers, who had run up at sight of the fire, which they attributed to a Prussian shell, began to organize a chain.

She gave them the child, and recognizing some men of Lefebvre's company, she begged them to go into the house and try to bring out Herminie, who was still alive, and the body of the general.

Three or four men went at once.

In a few moments they returned with the body of Beaurepaire, and two soldiers held the mad-woman, who cried :

"Let me go ! I must go and dress ! You do not know ! I am to be married ! Everybody is there ! And the candles are lighted ! Oh, the church looks so fine on a wedding-day !"

It was sad to see her thus pointing to the terrible flames that licked the remaining walls.

* * * * *

Madame de Blécourt had broken a leg in jumping from the balcony to the street. She died in a few days.

Herminie, whose senses had not returned, was taken to a relative, who offered to take care of her.

Beaurepaire's body was borne to the court-house.

There the president and the attorney declared that he had committed suicide to escape surrender.

It was said, they averred, that Beaurepaire had loudly proclaimed that to be his intention the evening when the conditions of surrender had been discussed.

Many witnesses would affirm it ; and the news of the general's heroic death—dying rather than assist alive at the surrender of a town he had sworn to defend—was propagated by the traitors who had caused his tragic end, and was accepted by the patriots.

He was accorded great funeral honors, this noble Beaurepaire ; the Convention having also accepted the explanation of an exemplary and glorious suicide.

The cowards who had aimed at the murder of Beaurepaire, done by Leonard, opened next day the city gates to the Austrian and Prussian armies, in virtue of the treaty of capitulation which Lowendaal had taken to Brunswick's general.

The King of Prussia made a triumphal entry into Verdun.

All the rich gentry hailed him. President Ternaux gave a banquet at the court-house, and the attorney, at dessert, compared him to Alexander the Great, taking possession of Babylon.

The daughters of royalist houses, who were later executed, and whom poetry has glorified as martyrs, insulted the devoted defenders of Verdun.

Robed in white with wreaths on their heads, they carried the crown of the King of Prussia, victor of the town, by treason's aid.

Verdun, like Longevy, deserved to be known forever as a city of cowards.

The frontier was ungarded, the way to Paris open, and the Austrian and Prussian armies had only to march on to the capital and inflict on it the punishment set down by Brunswick.

And the royalists, intoxicated with hope, believed that no fortress, no army, no resistance, could arrest the victorious course of the allies. They had not thought of Moulin de Valmy.

* * * * *

The garrison of Verdun had been allowed the honors of war. They went out with arms and colors.

Lefebvre, now captain, was sent with the 13th Light Infantry to the north.

Catharine took little Alice, whose mother, now insane, had left her practically orphaned.

She slept beside little Henriot, glad to have found her playmate of Verdun once more, and Catharine said to Lefebvre, with a sweet smile, showing him the two fair, sleeping children, "Say, dear heart, now we have two children whom our country has sent us, and none of our own!"

Captain Lefebvre embraced his wife and suggested that they might some day be blessed with children of their own.

The couple took to the road, with anger in their eyes

and hope in their hearts, swearing to retake the surrendered town and to drive out, at the point of the bayonet, the Austrians and Prussians, who would never have entered except for the traitors of Verdun.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE EDGE OF THE UNKNOWN.

WHILE these events were taking place in the east, and while Dumouriez and Kellermann arrested the invasion at Valmy, and saved France and the Republic, by forcing the Austrians and Prussians to retreat, what was Bonaparte doing ?

He was with his family, who had fled to Marseilles for refuge, and he was penniless.

After wandering from lodging to lodging, in the poor quarters, expelled by pitiless landlords, Madame Letizia Bonaparte, undaunted and energetic, found a fairly comfortable situation in the Rue de Rome. The proprietor was a rich soap merchant, named Clary, who showed at once a great deal of sympathy for the exiles.

The Bonaparte family led a hard and narrow life.

Rising at dawn, Madame Bonaparte attended to the household, cleaned, washed, prepared the simple meals, and then set her daughters to work. One did the marketing, another put things in order ; only the youngest was allowed to play.

During the day the mother and the two elder daughters did sewing, which brought in a little money.

Joseph had a position as commissioner in the military administration, but his emoluments were very slender.

As Corsican refugees, victims of their devotion to France, the family received rations of bread from the town. Bonaparte, again without pay, was unable to support his family.

Face to face with the horrible spectre of poverty, he lost courage and conceived, in his over-excited state, a notion of suicide.

One day, having thrown his last sou to a beggar, he sought a crag that projected far into the sea.

Here he fell into a profound reverie.

The smooth green water called to him. Useless to his country, disarmed, thinking his genius reduced to nothing, having no longer any confidence in himself ; losing sight, in the darkness of the sky, of that star which had guided him ; saddened by the feeling of loneliness, and that insupportable idea of being a care to his mother, instead of helping her, he considered, fixedly and sternly, the water plashing gently on the rocks before him.

Then, should he throw himself down, he would surely kill himself.

And out of life his family would have one less to feed, and could use all the bread doled out to the household by public charity.

He stood thus, a prey to his sinister resolutions, chiding himself, reproaching himself for hesitating to

die, persuading himself that he had nothing to hope for on earth, and looking coldly down into the depths that rolled below.

He stood thus a long time, on the edge of nothingness.

The sight of a bark, skimming along toward the coast, awoke him from his despairing dream.

"I must do it," he said quickly.

He was calculating the distance and the spring necessary to throw himself from the rock into the water, when he heard his own name, and turned.

A man, dressed like a fisherman, ran toward him with open arms.

Surprised and annoyed at being balked in his determination, he began to descend quickly down the rock, and to seek a more secluded one, where he could put into execution his dark resolve, when the fisherman called, "Is it really you, Napoleon? What the devil are you doing here? Don't you recognize me? Desmazis, your old comrade, in the artillery regiment of la Fere? Have you forgotten those jolly nights at Valence?"

Bonaparte recognized his old companion, and the two men embraced.

Desmazis explained that he had emigrated at the beginning of the Revolution. He lived peacefully in Italy, near Savona, on the shore. Having heard that his old mother, who lived at Marseilles, was seriously ill, he had equipped himself at once, for he was very rich, and had come, in fisherman's costume, to the port which he had gained, without attracting attention.

Assured of his mother's returning health, he had embraced her, and had helped, by his visit, her convalescence, and was now going off again. He had prudently ordered his skipper to await him outside the harbor.

He waited for his gig.

"But you—what were you doing in this lonely spot?" he asked kindly.

Bonaparte stammered a vague explanation.

Then he ceased to speak, and fell again into a deep meditation, looking again fixedly at the green water falling in sparkles of silver against the black rock.

"Ah, what ails you?" said the good Desmazis, anxiously. "You do not hear me. Are you not glad to see me? What makes you suffer? What misfortune hangs over you? Answer me—for you seem to me like one mad enough to take his own life!"

Bonaparte, won by his comrade's sympathetic tone, revealed all to him, and confessed his suicidal intentions.

"What! Only that!" said Desmazis. "Oh, I came in good time! Hold," and he took off a belt, "here are ten thousand francs in gold. I do not need them. You shall pay them back when you can. Take them and help your family."

And he handed to Bonaparte, who stood as if stunned, the ten thousand francs, a fortune for the penniless officer.

Then, to escape thanks, and also to prevent reflection from inciting Bonaparte to refuse, Desmazis abruptly left his friend, saying, "*Au revoir!* My

gig is coming—my men are waiting. Good luck, Napoleon ! ”

And, going quickly down the path by which he had climbed to find his despairing friend at a fortunate moment, the generous Desmazis reached his ship, hoisted sail, and was away toward the open sea.

Bonaparte, meantime, stunned, had let his preserver go, without a word ; as if fascinated, he looked at that gold which seemed to have fallen from the sky.

Then suddenly he started toward the town, and entered the room where Madame Bonaparte sat sewing with her daughters. He came in like a whirlwind.

He spread the gold pieces on the table, crying, “ Mother, we are rich ! Girls, you shall eat every day and each shall have a new gown. Ah, it is a windfall ! ”

And he chinked the money joyfully, and enjoyed the sound of the metal.

Years after, Napoleon had search made for his benefactor. Desmazis, hidden in a little village in Provence, occupied himself with cultivating violets, and seemed to have forgotten entirely the comrade he had once helped so opportunely.

Napoleon had a hard time making him accept three hundred thousand francs as repayment, and he made him, at the same time, administrator of the royal gardens.

The ten thousand francs of his former comrade saved not only Bonaparte and his family from starvation, but they helped Joseph to contract a wealthy marriage, while providing for daily wants as well.

M. Clary, the owner of the house, had two daughters, Julia and Désirée.

Joseph paid court to Julia, and she became his wife.

Bonaparte, always occupied with matrimonial projects, envied his brother's luck.

He cast his glances upon Désirée and declared his affection on several occasions very seriously.

But he was repulsed, politely, gently ; but repulsed, just the same.

The future conqueror preluded his manifold triumph by two successive feminine checks.

Désirée, like Mme. Permon, was not attracted by his sombre mien and his problematical future. Napoleon, on the other hand, seemed long to feel Désirée Clary's refusal. The tenacity with which he had followed her could not but augment his irritation. The desire to take a tremendous revenge upon the little woman who had scorned him—who later was called upon to choose among the brilliant assemblages of princesses and arch-duchesses—contributed, largely, to throw him soon into the way of the Widow Beauharnais, who was destined to be the Empress Josephine.

As for Désirée Clary, her future, though less exalted, was nevertheless, a brilliant one. She married Bernadotte, and we find her, later, Queen of Sweden.

Such, then, was the situation of Bonaparte, when Lefebvre and his wife, in the ranks of the Army of the North, marched toward the ever-memorable town of Jemmapes.

CHAPTER XVI,

JEMMAPES.

ROBESPIERRE said, "War is absurd." But he added, "We must go into it, nevertheless."

This was the "Credo" of the republicans.

War was absurd ! because they had no soldiers, no generals, no arms, no ammunition, rations, nor money, —nothing which could help a nation to take the field for attack, or to maintain itself on its own ground by barring the way of invasion.

All the generals were royalists or traitors, Dumouriez, Dillon, Castine, Valence.

The young Duke de Chartres, afterwards Louis-Philippe, was favored by the general-in-chief. Dumouriez, in a secret scheme embracing the far future, held for the prince-royal a brilliant part, the young duke was to occupy the Meuse and stop the advance of Austrians and Prussians upon Valenciennes and Lille. His laurels would be such as could be changed easily to flowers for a crown.

But the Duke de Chartres did not conduct himself very bravely on that great day at Jemmapes, and a simple servant, Batiste Renard, in the service of Dumouriez, rallied the prince's brigade, startled and ready to flee, deciding thus the victory at the centre.

The army—it was not an army, but a cohesion of combatants, equipped wretchedly, many of whom still wore their blouses and rustic attire, many without guns, armed with pikes caught up in haste—was undisciplined and uninstructed. But they represented the people, who, in a moment of enthusiasm, had caught the arms at hand and sallied forth, pell-mell, for the deliverance of their native land.

These enthusiastic volunteers went forth singing the Marseillaise, the Carmagnole, and the *Ca-ira*, tunes which beat time for their wild marches. But these heroic troops had also faith and endurance.

At Jemmapes the improvised infantry of the volunteers of the Republic, commanded, it is true, by subordinate officers like Hoche and Lefebvre, who replaced nobles who had gone over to the enemy, began the work which made it, for twenty years, victor in battles.

On November 5, 1792, when the sun set red as a bloody banner on the horizon, the army of the Republic encamped before the formidable position of Jemmapes.

The neighboring heights of the town of Mons held three villages, to-day active centres of the coal-trade, Cuesmes, Berthaimont, and Jemmapes.

The Austrians held these heights. Outworks, palisades, fourteen small forts, quantities of artillery, Tyrolian sharpshooters in ambuscade in the woods, cavalry massed in the valleys, ready to emerge out and cut down the French as they came up toward the hills,—such were the naturally impregnable obstacles which the soldiers of Liberty had to overcome.

The Duke of Saxe-Teschen, prince of the Empire, lieutenant to the Austrian emperor and governor of the Low-Countries, was the commander-in-chief, having under him, Clerfayt, a capable general, whose sage counsels were not destined to prevail. Clerfayt had withstood Gallic impetuosity, and instead of waiting, proposed a sally in three columns, upon the unprepared Frenchmen, thinking to scatter them before they had formed in order of battle. The advantage would thus accrue to the disciplined and battle-hardened troops.

The Duke of Saxe-Teschen, happily considered that little glory was to be gained from a night-attack; he wanted a great battle fought by broad daylight.

Dumouriez profited by the inaction of the enemy to arrange his army in a semicircle. General d'Harville commanded the extreme right; Beurnonville the right division toward Cuësmes. The Duke de Chartres occupied the centre directly in front of Jemmapes, and General Ferrand held the left flank.

The order was to advance in column. The cavalry was to protect the flanks. The artillery had been disposed so as to command the valleys between the three hills. The hussars and dragoons were massed between Cuesmes and Jemmapes, to bar the way of the Austrian cavalry.

These dispositions made in one part and another, fires were lighted and the night passed in watching.

While the battle was about to begin, this is what was going on in the Château de Lowendaal, in the

centre of the village of Jemmapes, situate between the two armies.

A stream and a wood protected it on the French side, and the mountain rose behind, sheltering its turrets from the Austrian fire.

Neutral ground between the two camps, the château had been designated as advance post for both sides.

The French scouts, sent to reconnoitre, met under the walls Austrian patrols. They had saluted each other with a few random shots, then each little troop had gone its way.

The Austrians held that the château was in the power of the French, and the French declared that the Austrians had taken up a position there.

The result was that the Baron de Lowendaal's residence was unoccupied, save by its usual inhabitants.

The Baron de Lowendaal had arrived the evening before, and had received there, as he had expected, his friend the Marquis de Laveline, and Blanche.

The troops had not yet begun to move, and the baron, more than ever enamored of Blanche, reassured by Leonard as to the conclusion of his love adventure with Herminie de Beaurepaire, had not hesitated to hasten the preparations for his marriage.

Beaurepaire was dead, and Herminie a person without reason or social existence ; there was no obstacle now. Lowendaal was free from her reproaches, her tears, her threats. The living proof of this affair, little Alice, had disappeared ; the baron found himself quite free.

He neared the goal of his desires. In a few hours he would possess Blanche.

The Marquis de Laveline had observed that the moment and the place were ill-chosen for the celebration of a marriage, when the enemy might be upon them any day. To this the baron simply replied that he must fulfil his promise. He reminded him, even brutally, that military operations could not alter the settlement of debts, and that the marquis's lands lay in Alsace, under the imperial arms, and he could not easily escape from his engagements.

He added also a remark, to such effect that the marquis ceased to object and said, "Then it simply remains to make my daughter decide. I cannot force her to the altar."

The baron had growled, "That is your business! See that you bring the little rebel to reason!"

He sent for the notary of Jemmapes, and ordered the chaplain of the château to have everything in readiness to pronounce the nuptial benediction.

At midnight the marriage was to take place; and, immediately after, making use of the night, the couple were to go to Brussels with the marquis. There, behind the imperial army, they could await results in safety.

Blanche, since her arrival at the château, had shut herself up, giving access to no one.

The baron had insisted twice upon having an interview; she had refused to let him enter the apartment which had been reserved for her.

She stood anxiously waiting by a window for some one who was late. Her eyes traversed the deserted fields, looking in vain.

It was Catharine Lefebvre for whom she looked.

Her breast heaving, her heart beating wildly, stopping now and then, with bitter sighs, her throat dry, her hands shaking nervously, Blanche de Laveline reminded herself of the good woman's promises.

She believed in her. She told herself that if Catharine did not come to the appointed meeting-place, if she did not bring the child, it must be because something had happened to prevent.

What could make Catharine Lefebvre fail thus in her promise, the unhappy Blanche could not guess. She did not know that Catharine was with the Army of the North.

She did not know that near her, where the fires of the 13th Light Infantry lighted up the woods of Cuesmes, and whence scouts had come, stood Catharine's canteen, and that there little Henriot and Alice lay asleep while the scouts approached even under the walls of the Château de Lowendaal.

Catharine had easily learned that Blanche de Laveline was at the château.

A countryman, devoted to the cause of liberty, had reported that the evening before a fine gentleman and a fair lady had come to the château.

In these elegant arrivals Catharine had no difficulty in recognizing her friend, and now her plan was arranged; she would go to the château, she would see

Bianche de Laveline and tell her that little Henriot was with her, protected by Lefebvre's soldiery.

Then they would seek the least perilous means of reuniting mother and child, and making it easy for them to cross the lines.

Her resolve taken, Catharine, having put into her belt the two pistols she always carried on the battlefield, left the camp and went toward the Château de Lowendaal.

She had said nothing to Lefebvre, for he would probably have disapproved of the expedition, fearing the dangers his wife would encounter in crossing woods and fields at night between two hostile armies.

But before going, she kissed little Henriot, who slept beside little Alice, and she whispered to him, "Sleep, darling! I am going to your mother."

Then she started, careless and brave, thinking lightly of the Austrians who crossed the field, but a little uneasy as to Lefebvre's opinion about her errand.

At the moment when she left a little clump of trees, the last outpost of the French, she saw coming toward her—a tall, thin form. The shadow of a man, hidden behind a tree, was distinctly visible.

She put her hand to her belt, took one of the pistols, and said, softly, so as not to be heard by the neighboring sentinels :

"Who goes there?" And she stood ready to fire.

"No enemy, Madame Lefebvre, but a friend," said a voice she knew.

"Who is the friend?"

"Why, La Violette, at your service."

"Ah, you, silly boy! you almost made me afraid," said Catharine, and, recognizing her assistant at the canteen, a devoted, though simple lad, who was the butt of the entire regiment.

La Violette was not a brave fellow, to all appearance, and he was daily, as we have said, the object of jests.

Catharine had put back her pistol, laughing at her sudden action in drawing it.

"Well, come," she said, "I mustn't scare you! But why are you prowling about here outside the lines, you who are a coward?"

La Violette made a step forward.

"I will tell you, Madame Lefebvre—I saw you leave the camp, and that is why I followed."

"To act as a spy?"

"Oh, no, but I thought you might be going where there was danger."

"Danger? Yes, yes, there is—but what is that to you? Danger and you are usually far apart."

"I have wanted for a long time past to become acquainted with danger, and I thought I might find to-night a fitting occasion."

"Why to-night?" Catharine asked, surprised at the young man's insistence.

"Because," said La Violette, a little embarrassed, and seeking for words, "because at night, one is at ease, one is not afraid of being seen."

"And you do not want to be seen?"

"Ah, for that matter, no! If I am afraid, at night

no one can see it, while by day that frightens me. But something tells me that beside you, Madame Lefebvre, I should have no fear."

"You want to come with me, then?" Catharine grew more and more surprised.

"Oh, do not refuse me! Do not send me back!" begged the poor lad; and he added in a tone of deep sincerity and emotion, "I love you so much, Madame Lefebvre. I should never have dared to say so by daylight—at the canteen—before the men. But here—where all is dark, I am braver—I scarce know myself."

Catharine had gone on walking while she listened to La Violette.

She would have answered, and in a half-irritated, half-satirical tone to her silly lover, but two shots just then sounded through the night.

"Halt," said Catharine, who was ahead. "Take care," she cried more loudly.

La Violette ran forward. Behind him rolled a round object, like a moving hump.

Catharine had seen the assistant cantinier disappear in a neighboring hop-field, whence the two shots had come.

Fearing an ambush, she had stood still on the edge of the field.

She heard a noise as of broken branches, the sound of blows, and the scuffle of feet; then, at a distance, on the plain, she saw the shadow of a man fleeing toward the woods which surrounded Jemmapes.

"He runs the wrong way; he will fall into the

Austrian outpost and be taken," she thought, supposing she saw La Violette.

And she added, with a sigh tinged with regret, "It is a pity ! He's a good lad, though weak. It will be hard to fill his place at the canteen."

She started once more on her way, turning the field, so as to gain the château whose roofs she espied, when up from the hops rose, tall and slender as the vines, the figure of La Violette.

He held a naked sword in his hand, and attempted to wipe the blade on the leaves.

"You !" she cried, stunned. "Where do you come from ? What have you done ?"

"I have kept that 'Kaiserlick' from re-filling his gun as he meant to do," said La Violette quietly, slipping his sword back into the scabbard.

"Where is he ?" asked Catharine.

"There, among the hops."

"He is dead !"

"I think so. As for the other, he has had his chance to have an affair with a coward like myself, otherwise I should have followed him, for I can run fast, Madame Lefebvre. But I had something which kept me back," said the boy, showing the round object which was hung on his back.

"What have you there ?"

"The drum, Guillaumet's drum—I took it from him."

"For what ?"

"It may be of use to me. Besides, I'd rather have his drum than his gun. I'd like to be a drummer ;

but I can't now, I'm too tall, Madame Lefebvre. Now suppose we run on? The Austrian I have disarmed will give the alarm, and I don't care to have those white-coats at my back. I don't speak on my own account."

"You are not afraid?"

"At night, never! I told you so! Come, Madame Lefebvre!"

"La Violette, you are brave."

"Do not mock me, madame! I know I am but a coward. I know, too, that I love you, well, oh, so well——"

"La Violette, I forbid you to speak thus."

"Very well—I shall be silent—but come on, on, now while no one is about."

Catharine regarded her assistant with increased surprise. He had shown himself in a new and unexpected light. La Violette did not flinch under fire! La Violette had thrown himself, sword in hand, upon two Austrians in ambuscade! Her assistant must have changed, indeed.

She thought for a moment of sending him back to the camp; but seeing him so warlike, so martial, she feared to pain him; and, besides, two were always safer than one.

"La Violette," she said, in a sweet and friendly tone, "I feel I must warn you that I am going to a place where there is danger—great danger. Do you still wish to go with me?"

"I shall follow you, though you go through fire, Madame Lefebvre!"

"Very well. Then begin by following me through water—for I must cross this stream to get to the château, yonder. That is where I am going."

"Where *we* are going! Lead on, madame, I follow."

"Very well—lips closed and eyes alert."

The two descended to the bed of the little river of Weme, and crossed the water, coming about to their knees.

Very soon they came before the door of the château stables.

Carefully Catharine followed the walls, to find a place where it would be easy to get into the garden.

Finding a place where the stone was crumbling away, she signed to La Violette to help her to climb.

"Gladly, Madame Lefebvre," said this naïve lover, happy to feel, as he bent over, the weight of the robust Catharine, who used his shoulders to climb-by.

In a few moments, both were in the garden, stepping cautiously, hiding behind trees, and moving toward a room where lights burned brightly.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NUPTIAL MASS.

THE Baron de Lowendaal and the Marquis de Lave-line had had a final decisive interview.

The farming noble had imposed his conditions: Blanche was to wed him that very night, or else he

would leave at once for Alsace, and confiscate all De Laveline's property, not to mention other reserve measures. Thus the marquis would lose everything.

The latter had proved his great desire to have the baron as son-in-law. It was not only the honor of this marriage which attracted M. de Laveline—his personal honor was at stake, and he was most anxious that Blanche should show herself tractable and consent to answer the baron's vows.

The baron, as he had made Leonard decide to rid him of Beaurepaire, held him by force.

He had helped to engage the marquis, always short of money, in a scandalous and very dangerous operation. A friend of the Prince de Rohan, Laveline had had a hand in the miserable Necklace affair.

He had escaped detection, but the baron held proofs of his participation in the fraudulent manœuvres—of the instigators of that great deceit which placed the Queen, Marie-Antoinette, in a peculiar light.

Could the marquis escape the baron by fleeing from France? The Austrian court, whose prisoner he would become, would try him, and avenge the honor of the queen, and arch-duchess of the Empire.

Would he remain in his own land? His rôle in the Necklace business, once exposed to the revolutionary government, would send him to the scaffold.

So he was at the baron's disposal.

Like the roof over his head, Blanche's father was between two fires.

So he resolved to make a last appeal to his daughter.

He found Blanche more resolved than ever upon resisting the wishes of Lowendaal.

M. de Laveline, when all arguments had failed, ended by confessing his personal danger. The baron was master of his goods, his honor and his life. Blanche must save him, or his death was certain. Would she, driving him to despair, be guilty of parricide?

Blanche, moved and trembling, on receiving this confidence, could only utter a few incoherent words.

She was astonished at the baron's strange persistence. Had he no pity, no dignity, he who would still marry her, knowing that she hated him, and that she loved another whose child was a witness of that love?

Persuaded that the baron had received the letter intrusted to Leonard, Blanche tried to calm her father's fears. She told herself that, since he had not told M. de Laveline, the baron must have been touched by her confession. He had not revealed her secret, perhaps because he did not want to lessen his influence with M. de Laveline. Deeply in love, perhaps he hoped Blanche would retract her determination. He had pardoned the fault she had confessed. He would forget that another had been loved before him. Perhaps, even, he hoped to be loved in his turn.

There, then, at the bottom of M. de Lowendaal's heart, lay the hope that she must crush. So she must persist in her refusal, saying nothing to M. de Laveline of her reasons for so doing. Blanche reiterated that she would never wed the baron.

"Very well," said M. de Laveline, carried away by

fury, and mad at her resistance, "perverse, and rebellious girl, I will make you obey. You shall be married to-night, hark you, to-night, if I have to drag you myself bound, to the altar ! "

And he went to the baron and told him to hasten the preparations for the ceremony.

Blanche, left alone, began to think. Lowendaal's resolution should not stand against hers. She must resist a union which was so horrible to her.

But, for that stroke, she lacked her chief ally, her boy.

Why was he not with her ?

The presence of that living witness of her love for another, must, she thought, convince the marquis and make Lowendaal give up his wish to possess her.

She asked herself, with wild anxiety, why Catharine Lefebvre had not kept her promise.

Darkness had fallen, and she could no longer look across the field. She must give up her hopes of seeing from afar a woman coming to the château, with a child in her arms.

Then she fell into a profound melancholy reverie, dreaming of armies which, like a band, surrounded the château in dark masses. She told herself that Catharine might have been afraid to start out among these men ; perhaps she had been stopped.

"She is not coming," she thought, sadly ; "and who knows if I shall ever see my boy again ? "

Then, frightened at the idea of being forced to that odious marriage, whose preparations were then going

on, and in despair at causing the ruin and perhaps the death of her father by refusing, the thought of escape struck her.

She would take the road, by chance, straight before her.

Night was propitious ; the presence of the two armies favorable.

Among so many soldiers she could hide ; the roads were full of poor people who fled before the troops.

A woman like herself would pass unnoticed : at least unsuspected.

She would get somewhere—to Brussels or Lille ; thence she could go to Paris, to Versailles, and search for Catharine and her little Henriot.

She had some jewels and a little money ; once far from the detested château, she would write to her father, and, his first anger over, the marquis would help her.

Her project settled, she began to put it into execution.

She took a little bag and threw into it, pell-mell, all her valuables, then, wrapping herself in a travelling cloak, and, taking another cape, to use as a covering or as a mattress in the uncomfortable places where chance might provide her lodgings, she went forth.

Being careful to leave her light burning, she opened the door cautiously, descended on her toes, traversed the corridor, listening, holding her breath, stopping now and then to hearken—oppressed, anxious, but determined.

She gained a door leading to the vegetable garden.

Noiselessly, she slipped the bolt, and was in the open air.

The night was cold and clear, but not dark. She must avoid, in crossing the open places, being seen by the men at the château.

Once in the woods beside the park she would be safe; should her flight be noticed, she was safe in those shades.

As she turned, cautiously, the basement of the hall, and passed a lower room where the servants were eating, she seemed to see, beside a tree, two strange forms. She shivered—stopped.

Slowly the two forms moved toward her.

She was paralyzed with fear. She dared not flee, advance, nor scream.

She distinguished vaguely the long, slim shadow of a man, then a woman in a short skirt and a little hat with the brim turned up.

Now they were beside her, and the woman said quickly, "Do not speak! We are friends!"

"That voice!" murmured Blanche. "Who are you? I am afraid—I shall call——"

"Do not call! Tell us where to find Mademoiselle Blanche de Laveline!"

"I am she! My God! Catharine, is it you? I know your voice," cried Blanche, recognizing her who was to bring her boy to her.

Catharine, surprised and delighted at the meeting, told Blanche quickly that she had come with La Violette, whom she presented, and who saluted respect-

fully, to tell her about her boy, and to bring whom she had promised, though amid the turbulence of war.

"Where is my little Henriot?" Blanche asked anxiously, afraid lest she should hear some terrible news.

She was quickly reassured.

"But this costume," she said, astonished at the cantinière's accoutrements.

Catharine told her of her service in the regiment, and that little Henriot was asleep in camp amid the soldiers of the 13th Light Infantry.

Blanche wanted to get to the camp.

Catharine advised her to remain at the chateau. On the morrow, at dawn, the movements of the Austrian army would be begun. Perhaps the French would occupy the château. Then nothing would be easier than to bring the child. To attempt to do so, in the dead of night, across that guarded field, were madness!

"It is fine, for me, a cantinière, to run thus between the two armies," said Catharine gayly.

And La Violette added, "You do not know what it is to be afraid! It is frightful! I know it! Stay here; it is better! Madame Lefebvre, tell her how it was when we had Austrians in the hop-field."

Catharine confirmed La Violette's opinion. Blanche had best pass the night in the château, and be advised on the morrow how to proceed.

But Catharine was distinctly told then by Blanche that she must quit the castle, or she would be forced, that very night, to marry Lowendaal.

"What is to be done?" questioned Catharine, em-

barrassed, and she added, "What a misfortune that Lefebvre is not with us! He could advise us! If only this imbecile had an idea." This last was concerning La Violette.

"Say, have you any idea?" she said to her attendant, quickly.

"If you wish, Madame Lefebvre," he said, timidly, "I can return to the camp and bring the child."

Catharine shrugged her shoulders.

"I can't fancy you, La Violette, carrying a child in your arms."

"Could I go with you?" said Blanche quickly. "Oh, yes, Catharine, let me go."

"But the danger—the cannon—the sentinels?"

"I fear them not. What does a mother fear who longs to embrace her child?"

Catharine was about to answer that she would retreat with her to the French camp, when the sound of a voice made them all hide behind the trees, whose shadow might protect them.

Surrounded by servants bearing torches, the Baron de Lowendaal said to one of his servants, "Tell Made-moiselle de Laveline that the hour for the ceremony has come, and that I shall await her in the chapel, in company with her father, the marquis."

The baron crossed the space before the château, and entered the chapel, a little edifice toward the right, in the centre of a mossy elevation.

"O God! I am lost—they will see that I am gone," murmured Blanche.

"We must gain time—but how? There is only one means, and that is risky," said Catharine.

"What? Speak, Catharine. I am ready to brave any danger rather than be violently given to that man. I shall never go to that chapel."

"If some one should stay in your stead! That would delay their search a quarter of an hour!"

"It would mean safety! I could get out of the park and hide in the fields. Who knows? I might even reach the French outposts. Oh, it is an excellent idea! But who will take my place?"

"I," said Catharine. "Come, you have not a moment to lose. Give me your cloak. Hasten! Your baron is coming!"

Lowendaal, having seen that all was ready in the chapel, returned, satisfied, to look for M. de Laveline, and to give, in passing, some orders to the grooms about the journey. As soon as the marriage was celebrated, he wanted to get away with his young bride toward Brussels. The approach of the Austrian army and the probabilities of battle made him push forward the hour he had set for the ceremony, and for the journey.

Catharine had wrapped herself quickly in Blanche's cloak.

The latter, covering herself with the cape she had provided, had silently embraced the energetic cantinière, and followed La Violette, who was proud of his new part, as helper to a wandering damsel.

Catharine followed them anxiously, till they were lost in the gloom.

They were beyond the limits of the park.

Blanche was beyond the Baron de Lowendaal's violence. She would soon see her boy.

"Poor little Henriot! Shall I return to him!" thought Catharine sadly; "and Lefebvre, shall I never see him again? Bah! I must not think of that! I must try to play well my new part, as a fiancée," she added, with her habitual good-humor.

She went bravely toward the lighted hall, where, supper over, the servants joked.

She stood in the doorway, and said, briefly, "Let one of you go and tell monsieur the baron that Mlle. de Laveline awaits him in the chapel."

Then she retired slowly, forcing herself to walk majestically, and taking care not to trip herself with her cloak, which was somewhat too long.

As she was about to enter the chapel, she heard voices near her.

"The baron spoke.

"Then you have the password, Leonard?"

"Yes, sir, I was able to get it. I lured to the kitchen a courier under the pretext of giving him refreshments. I gave him some drink, and he was evidently very thirsty, and sleepy too, for he's asleep now."

"And his papers," said Lowendaal.

"I have read them—nothing important—except the orders, and them I have kept."

"It is well, Leonard—run quickly to the great Austrian guards—to warn the commanding officer."

And the baron ceased speaking and re-entered the château.

"What does that mean?" thought Catharine. "What orders were they? Ours, perhaps?"

She wondered what she should do. Ought she not flee to the French camp and give an alarm?

But she had promised Blanche to stay and deceive her persecutors, by personating her in the chapel.

First of all, she must keep her promise, after that she might have time to get to the camp and warn Lefebvre of treason.

She entered the chapel resolutely, waiting impatiently for the baron's entry, that she might escape and give the alarm to her husband's soldiers.

"If they should be surprised in their sleep," she thought anxiously.

"No," she assured herself, "the 13th sleeps with one eye open, and they will let no 'Kaiserlicks,' even with a stolen password, arrive within gunshot without showing them how we are cared for, and how we defy traitors."

And, somewhat calmed, she sat down in one of the arm-chairs prepared for the couple before the altar.

The priest knelt, praying devoutly in a corner.

He paid no heed to her.

She looked curiously at the altar-pieces, the ornaments, the little oil-lamp which shed its flickering light about, and the four lighted candles giving out their funereal rays.

"B-r-r-r! this were a better place for masses for the dead, than for a marriage service," murmured Catharine impressed by the solemnity of the religious edifice.

Her waiting was not long.

Suddenly the chapel door opened loudly. A noise of feet and a clink of swords resounded.

Catharine, to preserve her disguise as long as possible, had wrapped herself completely in Blanche's cloak, and knelt, avoiding turning round.

The priest had risen slowly, and, after bowing twice, had approached the altar. He had begun rapidly and in a low voice to read the ritual.

The Baron de Lowendaal meantime, reaching her he thought his fiancée, took his hat in his hand, knelt and said gallantly, smiling the while, "I had hoped, mademoiselle, to have the honor and the great pleasure of accompanying you myself to this sacred spot, with your father, who is as happy as I am at your consent. I understand your timidity and pardon it. Now, may I take my place by your side?"

Catharine neither spoke nor stirred.

"I am glad, daughter," said the marquis, who now came to her. "I congratulate you on becoming reasonable at last." Aloud, he added, "But, Blanche, take off that travelling-cloak. It is not well to marry thus—and besides it is necessary to do honor to our guests, your witnesses and those of your husband—General Clerfayt's officers. Show them, at least your face! Smile a little: it is meet on such a day! One should see you smiling."

Catharine, hearing the Austrian officers named, made a quick movement.

She threw aside her cloak, and showed her tricolored skirt.

The marquis caught the cloak quickly, and drew it away altogether.

"This is not my daughter," cried the marquis, astounded.

"Who are you?" said the equally astonished baron.

The preacher, turning aside toward the cross, held out his arms, saying,

"Benedicat vos, omnipotens Deus ! Dominus vobiscum."

He waited for the answer,

"Et cum spiritu tuo."

But the fright was too general for any one to follow the service.

The Austrian officers had drawn near.

"A Frenchwoman ! A cantinière," said he who appeared to be the chief, with comical affright.

"Well ! Yes, a Frenchwoman ! Catharine Lefebvre, cantinière of the 13th ! Really, that turns your stomachs, my lads," cried Madame Sans-Gêne, freeing herself of her long cloak, and ready to laugh in the face of the discomfited bridegroom, to bandy words with the furious marquis, and to snap her fingers at the uneasy Austrian officers, wondering if the soldiers of the 13th, whose number Catharine had fearlessly hurled at them, like a trumpet-call or a battle-cry, were about to come out of the confessional, and surge from out the church under the protection of the God of armies.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DEBT OF GRATITUDE.

THE first moment of surprise past, one of the officers laid his hand upon Catharine's shoulder.

"You are my prisoner, madame," he said, gravely.

"Why, then," said Catharine, "I am not fighting! I came on a visit, privately——"

"Do not jest! you have introduced yourself into this château, of which I have taken possession in the name of the Emperor of Austria. You are French, and in Austrian territory; I shall guard you——"

"So you're arresting women? That is not gallant."

"You are a cantinière."

"Cantinères are not soldiers."

"You are not taken as a soldier, but as a spy," said the officer: and making a sign behind him, he ordered, "Let some one get four men to guard this woman until she has been tried and her fate decided."

The Baron de Lowendaal, who had rushed away to Blanche's room, now returned.

"Gentlemen," said he in a half-strangled voice, "that woman is the accomplice of a flight; she has helped my fiancée, Mademoiselle de Laveline, to get away. Where is Mademoiselle de Laveline?" he asked, turning furiously on Catharine.

The latter began to laugh.

"If you want to see Mademoiselle de Laveline again," she said to him, "you must leave these Austrian gentlemen, and get to the French camp. She is waiting there."

"In the French camp! What business has she there?"

The marquis whispered to the baron, "Let that fact make you easy! She cannot, among the French, be with that Neipperg of whom you were jealous."

He tried to calm thus the discomfited fiancé.

"It is possible," said the baron, "but, once more, what can she be doing in the French camp? Can she be in love with Dumouriez?"

"She went there to get her child," said Catharine quietly.

"Her child," cried the baron and the marquis, both equally astonished.

"Why, yes, little Henriot, a lovely little cherub, fairer than any child of yours could ever be, Baron!" cried Catharine familiarly, to the sorry bridegroom.

But Lowendaal moved aside, too much mystified, too much stunned, to answer Catharine's mockery.

Leonard, meantime, who had assisted at this scene, was quite disconcerted and made a sorry face.

All his projects were gone. Blanche was flown, the child, of whose existence the baron was now aware, was no longer a means of intimidation, a menace, an arm ever raised over her who was to have been, at that moment, the Baroness de Lowendaal. He had no further hope of realizing any of the schemes he had

concocted since he came into possession of Mademoiselle de Laveline's secret.

He thought over quickly the part he should take.

He was a clever man as well as an unscrupulous one, this Leonard ; and only his fear of the galleys kept him from betraying his patron at this time.

"I, too, shall go to the French camp," he murmured, "I have the password. I can pass—and perhaps I have not lost everything. We shall meet, my baroness !"

So, noiselessly, he slipped behind the Austrian soldiers whom one of the officers had brought, gained the chapel door, and shot across the fields.

The officer who had arrested Catharine said, shortly, "We must get through. Baron, have you any observations to make ? any question to ask of the prisoner ?"

"No, no ! Take her away ! Guard her ! Shoot her !" cried he desperately ; "or, better," he added in comical despair, "question her, find out what she knows as to the whereabouts of Mademoiselle de Laveline ; maybe she will tell what she knows about the child she spoke of."

The officer answered quietly, "We are going to imprison her in one of the rooms of the château—to-morrow she will be called upon to answer."

"To-morrow the soldiers of the Republic will be here, and we will not speak together, for you will all be dead or captured," cried Catharine proudly.

"Take her," said the officer, coldly, turning toward his men. And he added,

"Put down your guns, and carry that woman, after tying her, if she resists."

The four men leaned their guns against the rail of the chancel, and advanced, ready to execute the order.

"Do not dare to come near me," cried Catharine. "The first man who moves is dead!" And, drawing her two pistols, she presented them at the soldiers who were about to arrest her.

"Advance! Advance!" roared the officer, "are you afraid of a woman?"

The four men were about to attempt to execute the order, when, through the silence of the night, close to the chapel, sounded the roll of the drum.

It was the onset of battle. "The French! The French!" cried the terrified baron.

And a sudden, irresistible panic ensued.

The soldiers, forgetting their guns, ran in disorder. On their tracks sprang the officers, seeking to rally them so as to return to their quarters, persuaded that this was an attack by Dumouriez's advance-guard.

The marquis and the baron fled, to shut themselves up in the château.

The chapel was deserted. The priest, at the altar, indifferent to all that passed, continued to pray.

The drum continued to sound more loudly.

On the threshold of the chapel, Catharine, surprised, and happy, saw appearing, still beating his drum, the tall, spare form of La Violette.

"You here!" she cried. "What for? Where is the regiment?"

"In the camp. By heaven!" said La Violette, stopping. "I came just in time, Madame Lefebvre. Say, if we close the doors, will we be more alone?"

And he closed the doors quickly, and adjusted the bolt.

Then he explained to Catharine how he had conducted Blanche to the camp, but that midway they had met a French patrol, commanded by Lefebvre.

He had given Mademoiselle de Laveline in charge of two reliable men, and she was now, surely, safe with her little Henriot, in Dumouriez's lines.

Then, he had hurried back to the château, fearing for the safety of the 13th's brave cantinière. Surprised by the noise in the chapel, he had gone thither, and, raising himself up to a window, had seen the danger of his captain's wife.

Suddenly an idea struck him. He would use his drum to frighten off the "Kaiserlicks."

"And so, Madame Lefebvre, I found a good use for the chappie's drum. Wouldn't I make a fine drummer? But I'm too tall." Thus ended the brave boy's recital.

"Where did you leave my husband?" asked Catharine, anxiously.

"Two hundred yards from here! ready to run with his men, if I give the signal."

"What signal?"

"A shot."

"Listen! I think some one is coming. Do you not hear it—that noise—like the tramp of horses?"

The steps of men and a trampling of horses indicated the arrival of a great troop, with cavalry.

"Shall I shoot, Madame Lefebvre?" said La Violette taking hold of his gun. And he added, seeing the forgotten Austrian guns, "We can give, with these, four good signals."

"Do not shoot," she said quickly.

"Why? Do not think I'm afraid of the 'Kaiserlicks,' for it is night, and, as I've told you, now I'm not afraid."

"Unhappily, the Austrians have re-enforcements. You will throw Lefebvre and our men into an ambuscade. We, too, must escape otherwise—we must talk——"

"Command, Madame Lefebvre, I am here to serve you."

A rude knock came on the door, and a voice cried, "Open! or we'll force the door."

Catharine told La Violette to draw the bolt. The door was open, and cavaliers and soldiers entered. Their dark mass was shown by glittering swords, and casques and helmets, in the dark.

Catharine and La Violette had taken refuge beside the altar.

They saw there a great, black shadow.

It was the priest, who, having finished his mass, was muttering prayers—perhaps, for those engaged in war.

The soldiers had invaded the chapel. Everywhere gleamed swords and guns.

The officer who had wanted to arrest Catharine, re-

appeared, humiliated by having run before a woman, and anxious to take his revenge.

He turned to a personage enveloped in an embroidered cloak, who seemed to be a superior officer.

"Colonel," said he, "we should shoot this soldier and this woman——"

"The woman, too?" asked the man he called colonel, coldly.

"They are spies—our orders are such——"

"Ask them who they are—their names—what they wanted here—then we will decide," said the colonel.

Catharine had listened.

"I demand," she said firmly, "that we be treated as prisoners of war——"

"The battle has not begun," said the officer.

"Yes—by us ; I was the advance-guard, and here is the first column," said she, pointing to La Violette. "You have no right to shoot us, since we give ourselves up. Take care ! If you permit any wrong, it shall be avenged—expect no mercy from the soldiers of the 13th ! They are not far off ! They will not be slow in getting here ! Remember the mill at Valmy ! Your prisoners will pay for us both ! My husband, who is a captain, will avenge us, as surely as my name is Catharine Lefebvre !"

The officer in the cloak, who had been called colonel, moved in surprise.

He came forward a few steps, trying to discern, in the shadow, her who spoke thus.

"Are you, madame," he said politely, "related to a

certain Lefebvre, who served in the Guards at Paris, and who married a washer-woman, who was called Sans-Gêne ? ”

“ That washer-woman, Sans-Gêne, am I ! Lefebvre—Captain Lefebvre, is my husband ! ”

The colonel, greatly moved, made a few steps toward Catharine, then throwing back his cloak, and looking in her face, said, “ Do you not recognize me ? ”

Catharine stepped back, saying,

“ Your voice—your features, Colonel, seem to me—oh, it is as if I had seen you dimly ! ”

“ That dimness was the smoke of cannon ! Have you forgotten the 10th of August ? ”

The 10th of August ? Ah ! are you the wounded man ? The Austrian officer ? ” cried Catharine.

“ Yes, I am he, the Count de Neipperg, whom you rescued ; and who has ever been grateful. Ah, let me embrace you, to whom I owe my life.” And he advanced with open arms to draw her toward him.

But Catharine said quickly, “ I thank you, Colonel, for having remembered so well. What I did for you that day, was inspired by humanity ; you were pursued, unarmed, and wounded ; I protected you, not stopping to ask under what flag you received that wound—why you fled. To-day I find you wearing the uniform of the enemies of the nation, commanding soldiers to invade my native land ; therefore I desire to forget what happened at Paris—my friends, the soldiers of my regiment, my husband—the brave boy who stands, a prisoner, by my side—all these patriots

ought to reproach me for saving the life of an aristocrat, an Austrian, a colonel who would shoot people who give themselves up. Sir Count, speak no more of the 10th of August! Let me forget that I preserved such an enemy!"

Neipperg was silent. Catharine's energetic words seemed to produce in him an unusual emotion. Finally he said, in a tone of perfect sincerity,

"Catharine, my preserver, do not reproach me, that I serve my country as you serve yours. As your valiant husband defends his standard, so must I fight for mine. Destiny has made our birthplaces wide apart, under different skies, and seems to bring us together only in moments of imminent peril. Do not hate me. If you *will* forget the 10th of August, I shall ever remember it; and as colonel of the staff of the imperial army, victorious——"

"Not yet victorious," said Catharine dryly.

"It will be so to-morrow," said Neipperg. And he added, "The colonel of the Empire, who commands here, has not forgotten that he owes a debt contracted by the soldier of the Tuileries, the wounded man of the laundry at Saint-Roch. Catharine Lefebvre, you are free!"

"Thanks," said she, simply, "but—and—La Violette?" she said, pointing to her assistant, who held his tall form proudly erect, desirous of showing to the best advantage before the enemy.

"That man is a soldier—he came here by a ruse—I cannot keep from him the treatment given to spies."

"Then you must shoot me with him," said Catharine simply. "It shall not be said at the camp that I, Catharine Lefebvre, cantinière of the 13th, left a brave lad to die who, but for me, had never been taken by the Austrians. So, Colonel, give your orders, and let them be quick, for I don't want to wait. It is not amusing to think of taking a dozen shots into one's body, when one is young, and loves one's husband. Poor Lefebvre, he will miss me. But such is war!"

"Pardon me, Colonel," said La Violette in his childish voice, "I beg you will shoot only me. I deserve it. I cannot deny it. Each for himself, and woe unto him who is captured! I have nothing to say to avert my execution. But Madame Lefebvre has done nothing. It was I who kept her here."

"You—for what? What was she doing here with you?"

"I made her come,—to bring a child where one is not expected—and I am, at best, no famous nurse."

"What child? My God!" cried Neipperg, rushing upon Catharine, "you were to bring a child. It was——"

"Yours, Count. I had promised Mademoiselle de Laveline to bring her boy here to Jemmapes."

"And risked it? Oh, brave heart! Where is my child?"

"In security in the French camp, with his mother."

"Mademoiselle de Laveline no longer here! What do you tell me?"

"She fled at the moment when her father wanted to force her to marry the Baron de Lowendaal."

"But for you, I should have been too late to save her?"

"Without La Violette," said Catharine. "He did it all."

"Ah, I see I must set La Violette at liberty, too," said Neipperg, smiling. "Catharine, you are free, I tell you again. Take your comrade with you. I shall send two men to accompany you beyond the outposts."

Then, having given the necessary orders, Neipperg said to Catharine, "You will see Blanche; tell her I love her ever, and will wait for her, after the battle, on the road to Paris——"

"Or on the road to Brussels," said Catharine, saucily. Neipperg did not answer this.

He saluted with his hand raised to his hat, and said to Catharine, "Use the last hours of night to regain your camp. Believe, my dear Madame Lefebvre, that I do not consider my debt paid. I am ever under obligations to you. Perhaps the chances of war may give me an opportunity to prove to you that the Count de Neipperg is not ungrateful!"

"Pshaw," said Catharine. "We are quits, Count, for that affair of the 10th of August, but I owe you something for this lad," pointing to La Violette. "As you say, we must all pass, and sooner or later acquit ourselves. Adieu, Colonel. And you, tall fellow, by the right-hand path, and with quick steps, march!" she added, nudging La Violette jovially.

Both passed, proudly, before the Austrian soldiers. La Violette did not seem to lose a jot of his height, and Catharine, her hands upon her hips, her cocked hat with its tricolored cockade on one side, went out with her laugh of defiance on her lips.

As she crossed the chapel threshold, she turned and said, sarcastically :

“Adieu, gentlemen! I shall return with Lefebvre and his sharpshooters before noon!”

CHAPTER XIX.

BEFORE THE ATTACK.

NEIPPERG anxiously watched Catharine's departure. He wondered if, as the brave cantinière had said, he should soon find Blanche and see his little son again.

How should she, a young woman with a child, find a way to escape danger, in the midst of fighting armies?

One joy he had—the marriage plotted by Lowendaal and the marquis had not taken place; Blanche was free, and might still be his.

He looked about for Lowendaal and M. de Laveline, but they had disappeared.

An under-officer, whom he questioned, told him that both men had hurriedly entered a carriage that awaited them, and hastily taken the road to Brussels.

Neipperg gave a sigh of content. His rival was no longer there to dispute his possession of her who was his very soul. Hope returned to him. The future was no longer dark.

Blanche and her child lighted it up. He would find them, and live in bliss.

But a shadow crossed that radiant vision. How re-join Blanche? in what way find the child?

The battle was about to begin. He could not dream of crossing the lines, nor of going to the French camp, even under a truce, at that hour, when, with the sun's rising over the hills, a lurid light of cannon would illumine all, from Jemmapes to Mons.

He must wait the result of that day. Doubtless the victory would be theirs,—with the old, disciplined troops of the imperial army.

Could the shoemakers, tailors, and mercers, who formed the republican army, hope to hold out against the veterans of the Duke of Saxe? The cannonade of Valmy had been only a surprise. The fortune of war must return at Jemmapes to the side of the greater number, with military skill and tactics; the Duke of Saxe-Teschen had already despatched a courier to Vienna to announce the defeat of the "sans-culottes."

But in the inevitable routing of the French, what would become of Blanche and the child?

Neipperg's anguish was very great, thinking of the dangers of that defeat, and the disbanding of that improvised army, incapable of managing an orderly retreat.

He sought, vainly, a means of saving the two who were so dear to him from the terrible consequences of that disorder which he foresaw, when a sound above made him go immediately from the great room of the château (which had been made a centre, and where the officers who accompanied him waited to be given General Clerfayt's orders) to attend to the preparations for the coming engagement. He asked the cause of the tumult.

He was told that a dishevelled woman, with torn garments and a wild look, was being arrested at the entrance to the Park. She had wanted to pass the sentinels, and enter the château. She pretended to be the Marquis de Laveline's daughter, staying, for the time being, with M. de Lowendaal.

Neipperg gave a cry of surprise and fright.

Blanche at the château! Blanche having crossed the plain, full of troops! What did this sudden appearance mean, when Catharine had assured him that she was safe in the French camp? What unexpected misfortune did this sudden return presage?

It was really Blanche de Laveline, her garments tattered by the bushes and brambles she had passed through in the fields.

He rushed to her, and enfolded her in a passionate embrace.

Amid tears and smiles—for joy crossed her sorrow like a ray of sunshine through rain—Blanche de Laveline told her lover about her flight, of which he had

already heard, and of her arrival at the French camp, escorted by Lefebvre's soldiers.

By the instructions given by the good Catharine, she had been able to find hastily the canteen of the 13th Light Infantry.

There, on a mattress, rolled in a blanket, she had found a sleeping child. Beside it lay another mattress, whose covers were turned back.

She had gone to that sleeping babe, kissed it ravislingly upon its fair forehead when, by the light of the lantern which one of her soldier-guides carried, she saw the features of the sleeper.

It was a girl, who awoke, and stared at her with wide eyes.

She shrieked—"Where is my child? Where is Henriot?" Her heart was torn with anguish.

The little girl looked around her and then said—"Why—Henriot is not here! He has gone to see them shoot the cannon! Bad boy, he didn't wake me to go too!"

Later a soldier explained that he thought he had seen a man—a civilian—fleeing with a child in his arms, toward Maubeuge.

Blanche had fainted upon hearing that dreadful news.

She had been carried to the medical post and had been cared for.

When she recovered, she had asked for her child—she remembered now—that man on the Maubeuge road with a child—she wanted to rise and follow him.

The aide who tended her had pitied her distress.

"You could not," he had said, "pass by that road blocked with wagons, troops, guns, and fugitives."

"I want to find my child," the unhappy mother had persisted, adding, as she prayed him to let her go,—
"Why did that man take my boy? What crime does this point to? Who paid the villain? For whom did he come?"

No answer could be given to these questions, which were uttered confusedly by the feverish woman.

A sergeant who had joined the doctor, Marcel, at the ambulance, whispered to him, and much affected by her great suffering, had said, "Madame, I know something which may put you on the track of the wretch who stole into the camp, doubtless to help on some treason."

"Oh, tell me what you know," Blanche cried, hopefully.

"Speak, Renée," the aide had said, "in a case like this, the least indication which can help to find the culprit is welcome."

And the pretty sergeant (for it was Renée the young fiancée who spoke) had told how, in his company was a former orderly of the unfortunate General Beaurepaire.

This orderly had recognized, approaching the wagon of Catharine Lefebvre, a man with whom he had once drunk at Verdun, on the night of the cannonade. He had been sure of him. He was a servant of the Baron de Lowendaal; his name was Leonard.

"Leonard? M. de Lowendaal's confidential serv-

ant ? " Blanche had cried. And then, seeing whence the stroke came, she had accused Lowendaal of having sent Leonard to take the child, to threaten her, and to force her to that marriage she had thought to escape by flight. Little Henriot would become a weapon in the baron's hands.

Then, despite the counsels of the aide and Renée, Blanche suddenly recovered and started out again.

She had retaken the perilous route already passed over, hiding among reeds and rushes, wading streams, her feet bleeding, her gown in shreds ; she had come again to the château, hoping to find there, with Lowendaal and Leonard, her stolen child.

She knew not what she would do, what she would say to resist the threats of Lowendaal and her father's commands. But she was strong ; she would manage to tear her child from the hands of the thief.

Her joy at finding Neipperg in the château was mingled with the pain she felt in hearing that her father and Lowendaal had gone without any one's having seen either Leonard or the child.

No doubt the villain would join the baron at some place designated in advance and give him the boy.

Yet how accuse Lowendaal and the Marquis de Laveline ? And why ? For no one was sure whither Leonard had gone with his precious burden.

Neipperg told Blanche that her father and Lowendaal had taken the Brussels road.

"We will catch them to-morrow," he said, reassuring Blanche a little by his own calmness.

"Why not go to-night?" said Blanche impatiently. "We could be in Brussels by to-morrow."

"To-morrow, my sweet wife," said Neipperg, smiling, "I must go to battle. When we have defeated the French, I may go and follow the wretches who have stolen our child. My duty as a soldier must stand before my sorrow as a father."

Blanche sighed and said: "I obey; I shall wait. Oh, how long will be this night and to-morrow!"

Neipperg was in a brown study.

"Blanche," he said suddenly and gravely, "what will you do here, one woman among so many assembled soldiers? I cannot be constantly with you—and even then I must be discreet—reserved. I have no right to claim for you respect and help, regard and influence from our generals, princes and soldiers. Blanche, do you understand me?"

She blushed, bent her head and was silent.

Neipperg continued. "If we meet after the battle, your father and M. de Lowendaal, will assert their authority."

"I shall resist—defend myself——"

"They will rule you, through your child, whom they hold—so they will claim my son. What right would I have to claim that child, to insist upon their returning him to you? Blanche, have you dreamed of the difficulty which naught can surmount—nothing but your will?"

"What am I to do?"

"Give me the right to speak firmly and proudly, in your name and mine——"

“ Do as you will. Do you not know that my way is ever yours ? ”

“ Well, then, though parted, the chances of war have brought us together ; and we must be united at once ; you must be my wife. Do you consent ? ”

Mademoiselle de Laveline's only answer was given in the embrace she gave her future lord.

“ All is ready for a marriage celebration,” said Neipperg. “ The priest is at the altar, the notary is asleep in the château, and has his certificates ; we must wake him—he can change the names while the priest is pronouncing the benediction. Come, sweet, and make me the happiest of husbands ! ”

An hour later, in the chapel where Catharine Lefebvre had for an instant played the bride, Blanche de Laveline became Countess de Neipperg.

The last words of the sacrament had scarce been said, which should unite the pair, and while the frightened secretary was standing with the contract, duly signed and sealed, a burst of musketry resounded through the valley below the chapel.

Trumpets and drums gave to the echo the unmistakable signals of combat.

“ Gentlemen,” said Neipperg conducting Blanche toward a group of officers, “ I wish to present to you the Countess de Neipperg, my wife——”

All bowed, and invoked a thousand blessings and all prosperity upon a union contracted on the morning of battle, the eve of a great victory, in a chapel transformed to a fortress, where great volleys of cannon-shot pealed instead of marriage bells.

CHAPTER XX.

THE VICTORY WON IN SINGING.

THOSE who were, that memorable morning of November 6, 1792, on the crest of Jemmapes—the Belgians oppressed by the Empire, and destined to be freed by the republican victory,—saw a majestic spectacle which they could never forget.

Dawn rose, pale and gray, over the hills. Light winds rose on the summits, bending the tree-tops, and rustling amid the dry leaves.

Great numbers of Austrians, Hungarians, and Prussians, occupied the heights. The furred coats of the hussars, the tall bonnets of the grenadiers, the half-conical caps of the infantry, the lances, the cavalry sabres, glistened, twinkled, shone in the livid light of that autumn morning.

Below, improvised redoubts and fortifications and palisades hid the Tyrolese sharp-shooters in their pointed felt hats with a pheasant or heron feather stuck in the band.

The artillery, hid right and left in the embrasures of gabions and breastworks, was ready for delivering shot upon shot.

The Austrian position was, indeed, formidable ; the

right rose to the village of Jemmapes, forming a square with the front and left facing the Valenciennes road.

On the three wooded hills, as an amphitheatre, were arranged three rows of redoubts, each guarded with twenty pieces of heavy artillery, besides howitzers and three cannon to each battalion, making a total of nearly a hundred pieces ready to belch their deadly fire.

The advantage of position, the superiority of a trained army, well provided with ammunition, commanded by experienced generals like Clerfayt and Beaulieu, the force of artillery fired from above, upon an enemy advancing on a plain full of bogs, and forced to run the murderous fire from terribly defended declivities—all this gave the Imperial general an almost positive assurance of victory.

Moreover, the Austrian army, well rested, installed on dry ground, with plenty to eat, was ready, at the first shot, to start with the dawn and open the battle.

The French had passed the night on a damp soil: they had no time to cook their soup. They were told that they should have time later in the day to eat at Mons, after the victory.

And so they started, with empty stomachs, but hearts full of hope, promising themselves a breakfast before noon, after the battle.

Slowly the mist rose from the plain, disclosing men running, hiding, advancing in a great disorderly torrent.

At the first cannon-shot, while the army was beginning

to move, the bands of all the brigades began in a magnificent chorus the "Marseillaise." The sonorous trumpets answered the boom of the guns.

From fifteen thousand throats rose, simultaneously, to the time of the artillery and the tune of the trumpets, the martial words of the terrific hymn of the Revolution. And the echoes of Jemmapes, Cuesmes, and Berthaimont carried to the Austrians the superb defiance of the heroic call, "To arms, citizens ; and form your battalions !"

It was no longer an army falling into line, but an entire nation, rallying to defend its soil and save its liberty.

The old tactics were abandoned. As if it were a sea bursting its bonds, France gathered, forced its masses of men onward to the assault of those heights, carrying redoubts, fortresses, palisades, shelters, from below, even to the summit.

A flood in a hurricane—such was the battle of Jemmapes.

Only the cannon and the bayonet were used.

From a distance, the artillery desolated the Austrian defences, then, with naked arms, the volunteers, guards, peasants, workmen of yesterday, fell upon the defence line, cut down the cannoneers, forced the squares of infantry, surrounded the squadrons of cavalry, conquering instantly.

The old imperial forces, veterans of monarchical wars, were cut to pieces, dispersed, annihilated, by these raw young heroes, many of whom still wore their

farm-clothes, or mechanics' coats, and whose hands grasped guns for the first time.

General d'Harville commanded the left with old General Ferrand. Charged to free the village of Jemmapes, the latter met some resistance; Dumouriez sent Thévenot with re-enforcements, and they soon entered as victors. It was noon.

Beurnonville attacked the right. Under his orders, Dampierre commanded the Parisian volunteers. To these children from the suburbs of Paris belonged the honor of carrying three redoubts. These improvised warriors hesitated a moment, before the imposing array of the Austrians. The Imperial dragoons, charged upon them with a magnificent and terrible force. Intrepid, facing death and catching firm hold of their guns, they drove forward with fixed bayonets, dispersing that gaudy cavalry in all directions. Dumouriez's hussars finished the rout and drove everything before them as far as Mons.

As the centre two brigades had halted, a soldier, without rank or uniform, Dumouriez's valet, Baptiste Renard, took upon himself to rally them, to lead them, and so assured the victory at that point. There Lieutenant-General Egalité, better known later as Louis-Philippe, was in command.

It was to the sound of the "*Marseillaise*" and the *Ca-ira* that the last Austrian intrenchments were carried by the Parisian brigades, among whom were brave volunteers, and the Lombard contingent. The regular troops, the 13th, with whom Lefebvre fought like a

tiger, the marksmen and hussars of Berchimy and Cambaud, all these contributed equally to that decided victory which preserved France from invasion, delivered Belgium, wiped out the old German forces, and gave to the new republic its glorious baptism of fire.

* * * * *

After the battle the victors wanted something to eat, as they had sore need.

Breakfast and dinner hours were long past. They decided on an evening meal.

They drank to victory and to the nation, to Dumouriez, to Baptiste Renard, a hero-servant, to the National Convention, to the liberated Belgians, and to all humanity.

This last toast was proposed among the volunteers of Mayenne-et-Loire by a young major, with a blood-stained uniform, for he, too, had fought well among the heroes of that great day.

As they each related their adventures during the fight, one soldier said, suddenly, "You don't know what we found in the château down there, which was the Austrian headquarters! Major Marcel, it ought to interest you."

"What was it?" asked the philosopher, who had, on that day at least, very conclusive arguments, living and dead, to make good his theory of the barbarity of war.

"Why, Major! A child——"

"What did you say, a child? Tell us about it," said René who had drawn near, for one was sure to find the "Handsome Sergeant" near the major, Marcel,

René added, "Madame Lefebvre, cantinière of the 13th, has been asking about a child. Tell us what the poor little thing was doing among all the firing? And how you took him thence——"

"I didn't take him," said the soldier.

"You hadn't the heart to leave the little innocent exposed to danger? That would be unworthy a French soldier!"

"Listen, Sergeant," said the narrator; "we advanced, some comrades and I, toward the deserted château. We went carefully, fearing some ambushade; for the absolute silence of the place boded ill."

"That was wise," said the major. "Go on."

"Suddenly, drawn by a sigh, we saw in a cave what looked like a shadow. I raised—fired—then down we went to the cave. We heard a call—a cry—forced the entrance, and there was a scared little fellow who had been shut up there. He said to us, when he saw us, "It was Leonard! He ran away there," and he pointed to a second opening, leading to an outer passage——"

"Leonard! One might be sure to find that traitor wherever there was any villainy to be done, said a voice behind the soldiers.

It was Catharine Lefebvre, who had come up in time to hear the end of the soldier's story.

She said quickly, "What did you do? Shot Léonard, I trust, and saved the child. Where is he, dear little Henriot? For I am sure it is he, whom that wretch stole and wanted to give over to the Baron de

Lowendaal. Speak up, you slow fellow," she said to the soldier.

He hung his head. "Leonard escaped," he said. "As for the boy——"

"You left him, wretch?"

"I had to. In getting out, that fellow Leonard set fire to a barrel of powder left by the Austrians. We had to make a rush for the barracks—to beat a retreat."

"Friends," cried Catharine, "kind hearts are not lacking among you. Who will go and search among the ruins about the château? Perhaps the poor little one is still living! Well! Don't all speak at once," said she, irritated by their silence.

"One may happen to be wounded," said one man.

"We haven't finished our soup," said another.

"To-morrow we must be in condition to enter Mons," said a third.

And he who had told the adventure, growled: "There may be shots still, and more powder barrels to burst in that wretched place. A child isn't worth risking one's skin for that way——"

"I am going, anyway," said Catharine, "and alone, too; for Lefebvre is busy at the outpost, and you are too great cowards to go with me, I promised his mother to bring her that child one day, and I shall hold to my promise. Eat, drink and sleep well, children! Good-night!"

"Madame Lefebvre, I will go with you, if you like," said the Handsome Sergeant. "Two are more courageous than one!"

"Say three," said a timid voice, and the tall La Violette appeared. His sword had no longer a scabbard, his uniform was torn with sabre-cuts. He wore the cap of a dragoon—captain of the Imperial army.

"You coming with us, La Violette? It is good of you, lad. We are going, you know, about our little Henriot, for it is certainly he whom that poltroon Leonard has left in the château!"

"It is for you, I am going, Madame Lefebvre. I shall not let you go alone, across the battle-field, as you know. Ah! I was mightily afraid by daylight! That captain of dragoons should have noticed it, when he made for my head with his sabre—you see I had no cap."

"And you killed the captain?"

"Yes, to take his casque. I couldn't go about bare-headed. It would look as if I'd slept during the battle; and that would not have been comfortable, Madame Lefebvre. Then there were five dragoons with the captain who didn't want to let me take their chief's cap—it seems they wanted it. So I had to treat them all the same way; but it was hard, the five held on to the last, and they have hard heads, those Germans."

"Good boy, you did all that?"

"Yes, Madame Lefebvre. But let us get to the château. You know, I told you, at night I am no coward."

As they were about to start, a dark figure stepped across their way.

Catharine said, in surprise : " What ! you, Major Marcel ? "

" He'll come too ! " said René.

" Is a doctor of no use ? Suppose the child were hurt," said the major.

And so these four went out into the night among the slain, and the pile of débris and broken arms, which lay upon the field of Jemmapes.

Among the ruins of the Château de Lowendaal, Catharine found little Henriot, once more ; faint, but with only a few bruises.

Marcel attended him, and he soon revived. Brought to the camp, the little lad, saved on the battle-field, was adopted by the 13th, and became the child of the regiment.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STAR.

TOULON, like Lyons, Marseilles, Caen, and Bordeaux, had become a place for treason.

The Royalists, united with the Girondists, had opened the gates of the town, with the arsenal, to the allied forces.

All the poetry and the charm which surround the oratorical talent, the virtues and the renown of the Girondist deputies, cannot absolve them from their crime of infidelity to the country."

At the hour when monarchical Europe hung over

France, and pretended to dictate laws and impose a dynastic rule upon the free nation, the Girondists, forgetful of their past, misconstruing their duty, hate against la Montague, and fear as well in an over execrable backward movement, went over to the enemy, and called the stranger.

Happily, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Couthon, and Carnôt watched in the Committee of Public Safety ; the volunteers were in arms ; young generals like Hoche and Marceau replaced in the frontiers men like Dumouriez and Custine, now become royalist conspirators. By good luck, too, the cannons of the Republic, before Toulon and the English fleet, were intrusted to an unknown young artillery officer, Napoleon Bonaparte.

The traitor town was occupied by a miscellaneous force collected from all points on the shore : Spaniards, Neapolitans, Sardinians, Maltese. The Pope had sent monks charged to inflame the people. It was the arsenal of France. Its possession was of the utmost importance, for the rebels holding the sea-roads, could receive re-enforcements, and also English troops.

The republican army was divided into two parts, separated by Mt. Pharo ; enthusiasm, inexperience, bravery, and lack of discipline were the chief features of this tumultuous gathering of improvised regiments, destined to be the nucleus of the future Italian army.

The command was given by mere chance. Simple soldiers might become generals in a week. The general-in-chief, Carteaux, had been a poor painter, and was a worse soldier. The Surgeon Doppet, and the so-called

Marquis Lapoype were his seconds. This mixture was explained by the desertion and emigration of almost all the old officers attached to the nobility.

The commissioners of the Convention, Salicetti, Férron, Albitte, Barras, and Gasparin, were everywhere arousing the zeal of the chiefs, haranguing the soldiers, decrying resistance, and awaiting victory.

The siege was long. The gorges of Ollioulles, the defiles leading to Toulon, had been carried, but the place, itself, held out, defended by formidable out-works. Sieges require military experience, science, and coolness which seemed to be wanting in the chiefs as well as in the soldiers of that new army. Carteaux, the chief, knew nothing even about the placing of his pieces of artillery.

Chance brought them Bonaparte. Going from Avignon to Nice, Bonaparte stopped at Toulon to make a visit to his compatriot, the representative Salicetti.

The latter introduced him to Carteaux, who, with real satisfaction, and seeking to pay him a compliment, requested leave to show the artillery officer his batteries. Bonaparte only shrugged his shoulders; the bullets destined for the English fleet—so ill were the pieces placed—would not go beyond the shore.

Carteaux complained of the poor quality of the powder; but Bonaparte quickly showed the stupidity of this explanation. The representatives, struck with his reasoning, gave him command of the operations of the siege.

In a few days, with prodigious activity, he brought

material, guns, officers, from Lyons, Grenoble, and Marseilles. He considered a regular siege useless. If the English ships could be sent off, the besieged town, he thought, would surrender. It was necessary, therefore, to capture a point whence one could command a double road—and that point was the promontory of Eguillette.

“That will take Toulon,” said Bonaparte, with the eye of genius. So he made himself master of Eguillette ; the English fleet hoisted sail, and Toulon surrendered. The allies were defeated, and Bonaparte entered into history, victorious ; having manifested the greatness of his genius. He was made general of artillery, and sent to Nice to the headquarters of the Italian army, commanded by Dumerbion.

Elated with a commission which could, at twenty-four, satisfy his ambition and push his desires, Bonaparte thought of settling his brothers and sisters, which was ever his fixed idea.

Joseph’s good fortune overjoyed him. He often said : “ Ah ! he is happy, that fellow, Joseph.” To have wedded the daughter of a soap-merchant seemed to him then a fine thing. There was mingled with his admiration of the newly-wedded pair a little regret at not having gained Désirée, Clary’s second daughter.

But a matrimonial incident he had not foreseen came to trouble and irritate him.

He learned at Nice that his Brother Lucien was about to marry. And under what conditions ! Bonaparte did not cease to be angry over it for ten years.

Lucien had a modest position in the military administration at Saint-Maximen, in Vaucluse.

He was young, fiery, a good talker, and was the joy and glory of a chop-house where he took his meals.

Boyer, the innkeeper, had a charming daughter, Christine. She was not insensible to the charms and compliments of the future president of the Cinq-Cents. She told her father she wanted to marry Lucien.

The innkeeper, who was about to refuse room and board to his lodger, always in arrears for his bills, shook his head, and ended by consenting. That was one way of securing the account of his debtor.

When Bonaparte discovered that he was to have as sister-in-law, an innkeeper's daughter, he was furious. Already he foresaw his own greatness, and was angry with anything which, coming from his family, could injure his fortune or lessen his rising and spreading renown.

He broke with his brother.

Against the young woman he ever kept his ill-feeling. She was sweet and resigned, and Christine Boyer made several efforts to appease Bonaparte and gain his good-will.

A touching letter of hers is preserved, written when she was about to become a mother.

"Permit me to call you brother. Fleeing from France, according to your decree, I have come to Germany. Within a month, I hope to present you a nephew, for I feel that it is to be a boy. I promise you, he shall be a soldier; but I want him to have

your name, and be your godson. Do not refuse me. You will not disdain us for our poverty ; for, after all, you are our brother ; my children are your only nephews, and we love you better than fortune. May I some day be able to prove all my tender affection for you."

Bonaparte remained deaf to that appeal. The inn-keeper's daughter was kept out of his heart.

He dreamed of an alliance which should flatter his vanity, and wanted to find a great lady to whom he could not present the ignorant and rustic Christine.

Bonaparte's affairs came to a crisis.

He had lost his protectors ; the two Robespierres guillotined, the Thermidoriens pursued their vengeance. For a moment, after the 9th Thermidor, Bonaparte thought of proposing to the representatives a descent upon Paris with his troops ; but he gave the idea up.

Dubois-Crance, member of the Committee of Public Safety, anxious to disperse the Jacobins, who, despite police vigilance, were numerous in the Italian army, sent Bonaparte as artillery-general to Vendée.

Struck dumb by this blow, Bonaparte left for Paris, with his two aides, Junot and Marmont.

An insignificant artillery-captain, Aubry, was then minister of war ; and was jealous of the rapid advance of the officers. Girondist at heart, Aubry revenged himself on the friend of Robespierre, the strategist of Toulon, by sending him to command the infantry of the Army of the West. He was to rise on Dubois-Crance's disgrace.

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When they tried to soften the minister of war, this sad successor of the great Carnot tried to appear as a Terrorist. Bonaparte, having sought to plead his own cause, Aubry said, dryly :

“ You are too young to command the artillery of an army.”

“ One grows old quickly on the field of battle, and I am already old,” said the general cruelly, lashing this arrogant fellow.

But Aubry was inflexible. Bonaparte, refusing to go whither he was sent, was dismissed from the army.

So he sought service with the Sultan, and would have fallen back into his former black want, had not Joseph come to his assistance.

One of the directors of the war-department, Doulcet de Pontécoulant, came to him and made him enter the surveying service, just as he was about to embark for Constantinople.

The Orient had always attracted him. He dreamed bright visions of realizing fortune and glory under an alien sky. A seemingly fatal love of the Turk dominated his soul. He wrote to his brother Joseph : “ Everything makes me try the journey and fate ; and if this continues, my friend, I shall end by returning no more, unless I am brought home.”

With the blue skies of Islam came another attractive and fascinating dream : he would see a woman there, elegant in all the pride of the aristocracy of the old social order ; to her he would give his heart, his name ; in exchange for which she would give him a sensual

satisfaction, domestic felicity, ease, and access to the society which was then being reconstructed.

A sudden event came to condense these vaporous reveries to reality.

The long and formidable career of the Convention was over. The Constitution of the year III. was its legacy. The members of the Convention had decided that both sets should keep their places, in that body. These decisions caused an insurrection in Paris.

On the 11th Vendémiaire (Oct. 3, 1795), the electors of the various sections assembled at the Odeon, and on the 12th the electors of the Lepelletier section resorted to arms. General Menou, who was ordered out to insist on their laying down their arms, met them at the Convent of the Fille-Saint-Thomas. The insurgents triumphed. It was eight o'clock at night.

Bonaparte was at the Feydeau theatre. Surprised at the turn of events, he went to the Assembly, where they were discussing what measures to take. A general was needed to supply Menou's place.

Barras, who was charged to keep order, remembered Bonaparte, whom he had known and appreciated at Toulon.

Next day, the 13th Vendémiaire, Bonaparte convened the sections in front of the church of Saint-Roch, and found himself elected General of the Interior.

Now he held power which could not be taken from him. Yesterday, destitute and without resources, he was to-day master of Paris, and indeed almost of the entire nation.

His star, by turns radiant and pale, shed at last a clear beam from above. It was destined to be for twenty years a dazzling beacon-light throughout France.

CHAPTER XXII.

YEYETTE.

FORTUNE smiled suddenly upon Bonaparte.

An unexpected and powerful upward sweep landed him on the very pinnacle.

Despite his military talent, already revealed, and the praise he had received from influential men, his name had been unknown, his situation precarious.

Cambon, the great financier of the Convention, an honest and high-minded man, Michelet's favorite hero (though he is generally not very tender toward the real chiefs of the Revolution), had given a certificate in his favor on the occasion of the disturbances of Antibes. "We were," he writes, "in imminent danger, when the virtuous and valorous General Bonaparte, at the head of fifty grenadiers, opened a way for us."

Fréron declared that he alone was capable of saving the imperilled armies of the Republic.

Barras, the corrupt but clever politician, forgot him.

Mariette, whom he had snatched from death among the traitors of Toulon, and intimidated by the English, gave no signs of life.

Aubry, the obtuse captain who had become minister of war, had dismissed him from the army.

At last his dream of a wealthy marriage, which he had twice tried to realize, first with the Widow Permon, then with Désirée Clary, had vanished.

There remained for him only the chances of going to Turkey, and organizing the Sultan's Guard, and to this end he obtained leave of the Committee of Public Safety under date September 15, 1795.

"General Bonaparte is about to leave for Constantinople, with his two aides-de-camp, to take service in the army of the Sultan, and to give his talents and his knowledge to the restoration of the artillery of that puissant empire, and to the execution of such matters as may be ordered him by the ministers of the Porte. He will serve in the Sultan's Guard, and be treated by him as one of his generals.

He will be accompanied by Citizens Junot and Henri Livrat, as aides, Captains Sérégés and Billaund de Villarceau as chiefs of artillery detachments. Blaise de Villeneuve, as captain of constructive corps, Bourgeois and La Chasse, as first lieutenants of artillery, and Maissonet and Schneid, as sergeants."

But the insurrection of the 13th Vendémiaire had broken out.

All the world had lost its head, except he who was destined to save the Convention and re-establish public order.

Barras, whom the memory of the 9th Thermidor made careful in his choice of colleagues, was possessed of all

powers, and sought about him for a general capable of commanding the troops on that day, when every man feared for his life.

He spoke for Bonaparte.

Carnot had proposed to give the command to Brune. Barras answered that a man was needed who understood artillery. Fréron, who was in love with Pauline Bonaparte and was about to ask for her hand, favored Bonaparte.

“ I give you three minutes to consider,” said Barras.

During those three minutes Bonaparte's thoughts travelled with the rapidity and clearness of a celestial sphere.

He feared in accepting to assume the heavy responsibility, frequently unjust, always terrible, of those who undertake a necessary repression. To wipe out the sections' representatives might mean to consign his name to the eternal execration of posterity. He had refused to command a regiment against the Vendéans ; should he take upon himself a march against Paris ? He was not made for civil wars. Besides, he was really in sympathy with the sectionists. These insurgents wanted to put out the incapable and powerless, who were anxious to retain the power, and to preserve for the people the two chosen houses of national representation. If he failed, he would be lost, given over to the vengeance of the sectionists of Paris. Victorious, he must needs bathe his sword in French blood, and become, as he told himself, the scapegoat of the crimes of the Revolution, to which he was a stranger.

But his thoughts, revolving with lightning rapidity, showed him the consequences of refusal. If the Convention were dispersed by force, what would become of the victories of the Revolution? The actions of Valmy, of Jemmapes, of Toulon, of Col di Tende, the glorious successes of the armies of Sombre-et-Meuse, of Italy, would be useless; reaction, treason would efface it all. The defeat of the Convention would mean the retreat of the Revolution, the oppression of France. With the Austrians at Strasbourg and the English at Brest, the principles and the liberties of the Republic, as well as its conquests, would be submerged. The duty of a good citizen was to stand by the Convention, despite its faults, and since he could draw and wield a sword he would do well to defend the established government, despite the incapacity of those who administered it.

So, lifting his head, he answered Barras.

"I accept, but I warn you that, my sword once drawn, I shall not return it to its scabbard until order is fully established."

It was one o'clock in the morning. Next day the victory of the Convention was definitive, and Barras said to the court:

"I desire to call the attention of the National Convention to General Bonaparte. It is to him and to his wisdom that we owe the defence of this spot, around which he distributed his guards with such unusual ability. I demand that the Convention confirm the

nomination of Bonaparte as General-in-Command of the Army of the Interior,"

Some days later, Barras laid down his commission, and Bonaparte remained alone in command.

It was high time. He had no longer any shoes on his feet, and his coat only half protected him.

Some days prior, he had made bold to present himself to Madame Tallien.

That seductive and perverse creature, Thérézea Cabarrus, who had armed the versatile and discreet Tallien even from the prison, on the 9th Thermidor, now governed Barras, a personage of high rank.

To obtain the favor of Barras, and find some employment, Bonaparte, at the end of his resources, having neither money, nor fine clothes, had gone to a soirée at the house of the fair courtesan.

It required not only energy but force of character to dare to present himself in his poor attire, amid elegant ladies, powdered dandies, and decorated generals. Nevertheless, Bonaparte set forth.

He wore his long hair, parted on both sides of his forehead, unpowdered—for the reason that wig-makers must needs be paid for their services, and he had not the wherewith to pay them. His boots held together only by miraculous effort; the cracks carefully inked. The uniform he wore was the same he had worn in the face of the enemy, and though glorious, it was, also, threadbare—with a simple silken braid to substitute, for economy's sake, the embroidery of rank.

He appeared so shabby to the triumphant lady, that she, gave him, on the spot, a letter to M. Lefeuve, of the 17th Division of Paris, to the effect that he should obtain for him (in conformity with the decree, which gave every officer, in activity, a uniform), enough cloth for a new suit. Bonaparte was not in active service and had really no right to this, but the protection of Madame Tallien overruled any decree ; the poor, unsalaried officer had cloth for his new coat, and could appear on the 13th Vendémiaire, before the Convention—transfixed with fear and then exuberant with joy, as a saviour—at least properly clad.

Bonaparte's metamorphosis was as sudden as that of the princesses of fairy tales, whose palaces rise from pumpkins, and everything around him changed.

He took his place at headquarters, in the Rue des Capuchines. Junot and Lemarois were near him. His uncle was called to Paris as his secretary, He used his first money for the relief of his family. He sent fifty thousand francs to his mother, content to buy himself a new pair of boots, and to have gold embroidery put upon the coat he had received through Madame Tallien's intervention.

He hastened to use his influence on behalf of his brothers. Louis he took aside, with a captain's commission, and asked a consulship for Joseph. He sent money to the college where Jerome was, to pay the arrears, and ordering that he should receive extra instruction in drawing and music.

Assured of the fate of his family, sure of his own

future, now a general, in position to choose an advantageous command—for the Convention refused nothing to its saviour, and the Directory, which was about to enter on its duties, could not dispense with his sword. At this auspicious moment he returned to his matrimonial ideas.

A rich marriage, with a woman who could give him fortune, influence, social standing, effacing the traces of early straitened circumstances, helping him to uphold his new position ; that was what he desired.

But Bonaparte, the imperturbable mathematician, the profound and logical thinker, had yet to learn, as a young man, the domination of a turbulent passion which rules the actions of men, often for their own undoing.

He became a lover.

It was at Madame Tallien's, where the general went to express his thanks for the help given to the destitute officer of the previous month, that Bonaparte met the widow Beauharnais.

She was a creole from the Antilles ; one of those adventuresses who pass in society, protected by their foreign speech and ways, and admitted into society as being strangers. They are seductive, coming from afar. The widow was called Marie-Joseph-Rose Tascher de la Pagerie. She was born June 23, 1763, in the parish of Notre Dame de la Purification, at Martinique. Her father cultivated the plantations left him by his progenitors, who came, in 1726, as colonists. A former captain of dragoons, chevalier of St. Louis and page to the Dauphiness, he had little money and was

anxious to see his eldest daughters well married—for Josephine had two sisters, Catherine-Marie-Désirée, and Marie-Françoise.

A certain Madame Renaudin, aunt to the young girl, found the coveted husband. She had him in her hand; the younger son of the Marquis de Beauharnais, Governor of Windward Islands.

The marriage was decided from afar, for young Beauharnais was in France, and his fiancée set sail in September, 1779. She came to Bordeaux, and, some time after, married the Viscount Alexandre de Beauharnais, who, when he married, was made captain in the La Sarre regiment. He was eighteen years old; she sixteen. Bonaparte, at the time when the future empress was married, was ten years old, and entering the School of Brienne.

In the Rue Thévenot, in Paris, the couple lodged. On September 2, 1780, was born Eugène, the future prince viceroy of Italy. The household did not remain long united. Soon the young count left his wife to serve in America under Bouillé's orders. The desire to help on American independence, and to immortalize himself along with Lafayette and Rochambeau actuated the young husband less than his wish to escape a coquettish wife, frivolous in the extreme, and terribly extravagant. So, during his absence, April 10, 1788, was born the future Queen Hortense, the mother of Napoleon III.

At that time, Josephine had given her husband no cause for complaint. The latter, married too young,

gave himself up to new loves and passing distractions. His departure did not grieve his wife. It gave her a liberty she was glad to obtain.

She took up, then, a scarcely regular life, having lovers, debts, heights and depths. She lived on the edge of society. The court was not forbidden her, for the Beauharnais were of the Orléans nobility, but it was difficult for her to enter. She had only her Aunt Renaudin to present her, and that lady's equivocal position kept her from Versailles.

M. de Beauharnais, returning to France, desired a separation. The court granted it, but as the wrongs were on both sides, Josephine was allowed ten thousand livres alimony. Now she decided to visit her home. She returned to Martinique, and came back, in 1791, in company with a gallant marine officer, M. Scipio de Roure.

She found her husband in a high station. The Viscount de Beauharnais, deputy of the nobility, had become an influential member of the Constituency. To him belongs the honor of having proposed, on that famous night of August 4th, the admissibility of all citizens in employments civil, military, and ecclesiastic, and the equality of taxes for all classes of citizens; the abolition, consequently, of the old order in two ways. He had been elected several times as president of the National Assembly—and received, in his home on the Rue de la Université, a great number of deputies, of whom he was the head.

Josephine, ambitious and anxious to preside over a political *salon*, frequented by all those whom the

Assembly counted as great men, desired to be reconciled to her husband. She seemed humble, sweet, repentant,—she succeeded. For some time she reigned as a queen in the house on the Rue de l'Université.

But the days grew dark. The Terror had closed the salons. Beauharnais was in the army, and as General-in-chief of the army of the Rhine, he conducted the siege of Mayence. He was arrested, in 1794. Though a republican and a patriot, General Beauharnais could not have connived with traitors. Yet, despite his brother's presence and rank as a staff-officer, he was guillotined on the 5th Thermidor. Four days later, the prisons were opened and he would have been saved.

His death was due to a mistake, and to the haste with which, at that terrible period, they executed suspected criminals.

Beauharnais should stand blameless, though his head rolled among those of traitors, conspirators, and enemies of the nation. He was the victim of unjust denunciations. He himself declared that the Revolution was not responsible for his death.

Before going to the scaffold, in a letter worthy of an ancient philosopher, Beauharnais expressed his fear that posterity would consider him a "bad citizen," seeing his corpse among those traitors whom the law punished. "Strive to redeem my memory," he wrote to his wife in that supreme hour when he was interrupted by the death summons. "Prove that the life I consecrated to the service of my country, to the

triumph of liberty and equality, should, in the eye of the people, be free from the odious calumnies which placed me among the suspected. But this work must be left till later ; for, in revolutionary time, a great people who are in earnest must sometimes be unjust, though they seek later to consign to oblivion the wretches who cause the death of the innocent."

The noble citizen concluded by recommending his young wife to console herself with the education of her children, teaching them that it was by force of civic law that his death was accomplished, and that they must forget it and the injustice."

How admirable in character was this hero, who, coming from the aristocracy, became a defender of the people, fought feudalism, and proclaimed first—at an epoch when that law of modern society seemed a heresy, an anarchistic Utopianism, equality of taxation, and the admission of nobles, officers of the army, and employees in the magistracy into the State departments ; and who, after presiding over the greatest of French assemblies, and commanding the army of the Rhine, died on the scaffold, a victim of wild passions, yet submitting to the decree of a cruel and unjust accusation ; who on the threshold of death, had but one fear, that it should be believed that he had merited his ignominy ! Alexandre de Beauharnais has a right to a place in the Revolutionary Pantheon, among the bloody martyrs of the new evangel—the Pantheon of equality where are found together judges and judged, Danton beside St. Just, and Vergniaud with Couthon and Soubrany.

Josephine was decidedly favored in marriage. Beauharnais and Bonaparte, what woman would have been other than proud of two such husbands? Who would not have loved, adored them? She deceived them, playing with the officers and dandies whom the chances of society presented, and whom she was pleased to see at her feet.

The Revolution made of Josephine, who had been a social outcast, a great lady. Her husband's name served to place her above the women of the old court who had escaped the Terror. In prison she had learned to know some of the venerable survivors of the old aristocracy; and she also knew La Cabarrus.

It was to the latter's house, where she sat enthroned as Tallien's wife and Barras's mistress, that Josephine came, and one day met the slim and silent young conqueror.

Bonaparte was now become the fashion. Everybody spoke of the young general who would achieve glory at one bound. The salons disputed the privilege of having him. Women smiled upon him. But he passed them, grave, indifferent, sovereign already.

The widow Beauharnais, with her creole nonchalance, her grave manner, her charms already on the wane, transfixed this cold young man with her first glance.

In that first meeting at Madame Tallien's, Bonaparte felt himself attracted, captured. He felt himself dragged into the circle of this dark daughter of the isles, and, charmed, he submitted.

She was not beautiful. Her future brother-in-law, Lucien Bonaparte, gives us his impression of her :

“ She was very languid, and had no feature one could call beautiful, though with the creole suggestions in the soft curves of her slight, short figure ; a face, it is true, without natural freshness, to which the colors of her toilet lent a lustre and brilliancy ; everything indicated the remains of her early youth, as the painter, Gerard, has faithfully shown in his portraits of the First Consul’s wife. In the brilliant soirées of the Directory, to which Barras introduced me, she seemed to me no longer young, and inferior to the beauties who generally composed the court of the voluptuous director, and of whom the fair Tallien was the veritable Calypso.”

This unflattering portrait seems in the main to have been correct.

Josephine was over thirty-two years of age. She was the mother of two children, and her lively existence, her excitements, her travels, the disruption of her family life, her passing loves, had certainly hastened the march of time.

Nevertheless, she vanquished the victor at their first meeting. Bonaparte left the Talliens his heart throbbing, his eyes bright, filled with a fervor which for once was not that of glory, tormented by a pang not that of hunger ; forgetting even his family and disdaining the conquest of the world, of which he dreamed in the lonely hours of his youth—to think only of Yeyette, as she had told him her friends called her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MADAME BONAPARTE.

BONAPARTE—whose whole youth had been chaste as it had been laborious, who knew no debauches save mental ones, no intoxication save that of intellect—became Yeyette's importunate lover.

It is certain that Josephine never merited this excess of love. But the young general was in a psychological condition in which his heart first evidenced its contact with a woman corresponding almost exactly with the type, the model, his early dreams and waking thoughts had long invoked.

Josephine was not one of those clever blue-stockings of whom he had ever had a horror. She never let fly sharp sallies or malicious epigrams. She pleased the general most by seeming enormously interested in his military conquests, and hearing him talk of strategy.

She had, in his eyes, an incomparable prestige. Did she not belong to the old aristocracy? For the little Corsican gentleman, brought up on a miserable domain, and who had never seen women elegantly dressed, breathing the perfume of the ancient court, this viscountess seemed the personification of feminine beauty allied to grandeur. The prestige of nobility, now that the Terror was passed, revived in all its

lustre. The guillotine had put out of the way all the frayed glitter of the old school ; and from the new wave of blood the nobility took fresh color and new vigor. The hour and the scene recalled forcibly the words of the old dowager ; a " plebeian, a marquise, is never over thirty." The attraction of nobility, the prestige of title, name, and rank, despite our new social order, seemed to be perpetual. Does not the merchant feel proud of his titled clientèle ? Do not hotel-keepers open wide the doors of their rooms, even of their strong-boxes, to the gallant man with a title who may prove but a common thief ? And in the lightness of their love-vows, do not the Don Juans form their admirations and desires at sight of a pretty girl, by that once respectful exclamation, " I should kiss her as if she were a queen ! "

Bonaparte, whose military genius was joined to absolute ignorance of the world's ways, could not distinguish between a really great lady, such as he had never seen, and that careless widow, with her soft glances and languorous eyes, who spoke to him in simple and sincere praise of his military skill.

There is no doubt that awakening passion, however reasonable or unreasonable it be, starts always with a germ, a motor-unit, a molecule—so the embryologists would claim. With one it is the need to love, the sex which attracts ; another succumbs to the law of attraction and sociability, fleeing from isolation, and *ennui* which holds him in its tentacles. For such a man love is as a flower which springs in a ready soil ;

then, for certain men, whose thought is objective, for imaginative creatures, such as construct castles in Spain, the lovers of fanciful forms appearing on dream-shores, for these, love is a realized concept, an idea incarnate, a thought condensed to matter—for such, and Napoleon was one of them, poets who never wrote a line, woman is invoked as a spirit,—she comes out of the unknown as a statue in the sculptor's hand from the shapeless block ; almost as the fair Eve appeared beside the first lover.

Napoleon loved, in Josephine, an ideal woman.

He did not find in her the features, the eyes, nose, and mouth of his ideal. With her dusky complexion, with its tropical richness, suggesting out-door life, and ease, wherein negresses watched her soft slumbers, fanning her with great ostrich plumes, with her deep blue eyes, and her chestnut hair, confined with bands of gold, Yeyette no doubt was not exactly the type of his imagination.

But she personified admirably the ideal woman, for whom he had waited and hoped, and whom he now wished to possess.

His desire for the widow Permon, who was old enough to be his mother, proved that age was to him only a secondary consideration. Josephine's maturity was, doubtless, an extra attraction to the rude soldier, the cold and pitiless politician. With women, Bonaparte always was short and stormy.

His useless descent upon the soap-merchant of Marseilles, for the hand of Désirée, Madame Joseph Bona-

parte's sister, proved that he was not quite indifferent to the question of the dowry.

He wanted a wife who could rule a salon, who would bring him, with ease, a home, friends, and established social rank. Josephine, for him, represented all these things. Like the widow Permon, she was of the aristocracy, and, moreover, she was, like Désirée Clary, rich. At least Bonaparte thought so.

After the meeting at Tallien's, he was invited to the little house at No. 6, Rue de Chantereine, and was dazzled by what he took for the luxury of a real viscountess.

The lodgings in the Rue Chantereine were modest, and furnished with little expense. Lack of money was everywhere evident. With Gauthier, her gardener, coachman, and footman, and Mademoiselle Compoin, her maid, a person very intimate with Josephine, dressed almost as well as her mistress, and treated as a friend, a sister—with these Josephine succeeded in dazzling Bonaparte, who knew nothing of luxury, and was, as a young officer, invited by a colonel's lady.

The Hôtel de Chantereine, let to the Citizeness Talma, for four thousand livres, was the lodging-place of the tinselled Bohemian. There was no wine in its cellars, no wood in its shed, but a coach with two lean horses stood, in full view, at the entrance. Josephine, a practised coquette, kept up an apparent luxury. Her dresses were many, her undergarments few. Her light, airy, muslin-gowns, produced a charming effect and cost very little.

Bonaparte was captivated at once. He left the battered little house, his head turned, his senses numbed. He now wanted Josephine, as wife.

He judged her exterior only,—her position in the world, her origin, her affinities, her circle, he did not consider,—as wife, she would satisfy him wholly. Nothing could ever stand between him and his will, shot like a shell from a cannon.

But Josephine hesitated. Though her own position was precarious, she questioned if Bonaparte's good fortune, would last. After all, for her, he was but a new man, thanks to Barras's friendship. Without Barras's voice, Carnot's men, Brune or Verdières, would have had charge of defending the Convention on the 13th Vendémiaire. Would Barras continue to interest himself in the young adventurer? Would not the all-powerful Directory look askance on this marriage?

Josephine resolved to go and consult the sensual and cynical potentate.

So, one night, she had her horses brought, and went to the Luxembourg, to the Citizen Barras, member of the Directory.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT BARRAS'S.

THERE was a fête at the Luxembourg when Josephine was announced.

She was carefully dressed in the new style, in a dress

like Flora's, floating, vaporous, light, almost transparent, which let the dusky ivory of her flesh shimmer through its soft tissue.

It was necessary, not only to please Barras, but to eclipse all the beauties who bloomed in rose, white and blue, as Greeks or Romans, as Dianas or Terpsichores, as any of the Olympics, there in the salons of Barras,

Whether she refused or accepted General Bonaparte, Josephine proposed to maintain her reputation as a fashionable, popular lady of the court, and to prove that she had not renounced her sovereignty of graces. At bottom, this trip which she made, this counsel and sanction she sought of the brilliant director, was only a pretext to show she was asked, desired, loved, by a man, doubtless somewhat new, but of whom the world seemed to foresee arise, and even to predict, a great future.

She wanted to show her rivals her lover Bonaparte, as a new ornament, a jewel still in the rough, but very precious ; and she was not sorry to tell Barras, while pretending to consult him, that his colleague, his second in command on the great day of the 13th Vendémiaire, the man whose victorious sword would weigh heavier than his parade-sabre in the balance of the future, found her adorable, and did not prefer to her to some wicked woman with low charms.

Was it coquetry, regret, or irony ? Josephine does not figure in history as a mistress of Barras. She was, in reality, in the quiet rooms, decorated with Prud'hon's sylphs and diaphanous nymphs, an hour's queen

to Barras, the democratic pasha, with his brutal and weatherbeaten face, and his elegant pretensions as a member of the Regency.

No woman ever resisted this man, who broke heads as well as hearts. His life held the record of many loves. This revolutionist was a born aristocrat, the Count Paul de Barras, if you please. Southern, of course, being born at Fox-Emphoux, captain in the royal army, member of the convention, regicide, president of the redoubtable Assembly, invested with supreme command on the 9th Thermidor and on the 13th Vendémiaire, he had been elected member of the Directory. His colleagues were Larévellière-Lepeaux, Reubell, Letournier, and Carnot. The last of them all, Barras imposed on or really governed the Directory. He was tall and strong, and kept under his solemn director's cloak the manners and looks of a gay Don Juan of the barracks. His hard-working colleague, Letournier, the austere Carnot and Reubell, the enthusiastic, honest, but unornamental and deformed Larévellière-Lepeaux,—these did not represent the brilliant theatrical power which the French of the year III. wanted; they were tired of liberty; regretted their pleasures, the carelessness, the easy manners, and pompous ways of the old school.

Barras, by his bearing, by the way he carried his head among petitioners of all ranks and extractions, by the way he lifted his hat, with its three white feathers, by the soldierly carelessness with which he wore his curved sword in its silver scabbard, personified admi-

rably—for the mob, become servile once more, re-established majesty without monarchy. This Louis XIV. of the army was a king in the Republic. Every one served him ; every thing, too ; even his vices. His mistresses formed the guard of his jovial power. He gave great fêtes. The people did not dream of reproaching this entertainer nor his entertainments. War and restraint were over ; in all classes of society one rule seemed to hold, that which permitted people to live in peace and hold a continual carnival.

The guillotine, the frightful street-fights, the men in their red caps, the furies of the guillotine, the proscribed luxury, the love suspected, the art fled to the stranger,—all this was now but a hideous nightmare. Men revelled in joy, in intoxication ; took up their pleasures so suddenly dropped, even sat at table beside those who had escaped the fatal car. Dinners, lawn-parties, wines drunk with gay companions and pretty girls in low-cut gowns, roses strewed on tables and everywhere, equipages which rivalled the horses of Pluto, men who, like Lazarus, had actually risen from the tomb,—all these gave to that strange period so eventful a color and a scope which ages of time will never reproduce.

He was the personification in his follies, his passions, and his force, of this short period of the Directory,—the voluptuous but clever Barras.

He had re-established order in the streets, and pleasure in society. Was it astonishing that women raved about him ? With all, he spent much : he threw

gold on the card-table of the Palais-Royal, and scattered it by handfuls among the young beauties, attracted, like mercenary butterflies, to that new star's light. La Cabarrus was the prime favorite. This intriguing courtesan, who not needing him any longer, repulsed the odious Tallien, was not only mistress in name, but she really ruled Barras. She was the great agent of social corruption. Her rôle was that of a magnificent broker. She aided the Sybarite director to bury the Revolution in flowers, and to make a drunken orgy succeed to the intoxication of war. The Revolution, where brothers had devoured each other, was a feast of Atrides. La Cabarrus and Barras made a feast of Trimalcion.

A soirée at Barras's had all the elegance, the distinction, the vice, the virtue and the glory of the society of the times. Young generals, old legislators, women who wore locks of hair of their betrothed husbands, brothers, or first loves, cut from the dear heads of their Samsons, rich contractors, landed proprietors of yore, dandies with ample frills, ladies laden with jewels, wise men, writers, Monge, Laplace, Volney, were all found in the halls of the Luxembourg, glad to be alive, anxious to retrieve lost hours, careless of the future, all saying with a sceptical smile, "If this could but last!" In the shadow, Talleyrand, returned from America, sneered at that decomposed and decomposing society, yet hovered over it, like a vulture over a corpse.

When Josephine sent word to Barras that she de-

sired to see him particularly, she was led to a small room beside the director's study.

She waited some moments. The partition was thin : a sound of voices came from the neighboring room ; she heard the end of a discussion.

"Why do you suspect Bonaparte ?" said Barras, whose sonorous voice Josephine recognized ; "he is a man pure as gold, such as we need."

"I fear he is ambitious," said the person who was talking with Barras.

"Are not you so, too, Carnot ?" answered the director. "Do be frank ; you are jealous of Bonaparte ; the plans he made for the army of Italy, you destroyed them without submitting them to the Directory, fearing the glory would leave you in the triumph of arms !"

"I did not know his plans," said Carnot. "I never knew them. I swear that is not true."

"Do not raise that hand !" cried Barras brutally. "It is red with blood !"

"You reproach me, you, too," said Carnot harshly, "for having signed the death-rolls ?"

"All the death-rolls—yes, you signed them *all* with Robespierre——"

"I signed without reading them, as Robespierre signed my plans of attack without casting his eyes upon them—we served the Republic, each in his own way. May posterity judge us !"

"Go to, you drinker of blood !" cried Barras.

"Adieu, you who grow weak with gold, and voluptuousness," said Carnot. "I tell you, yet again—I

fear the ambition of Bonaparte ; but I will not oppose him as general in Italy ! After all, he too was a Terrorist, a protégé of the Jacobins, a regicide like you and myself ; reward him as you will—but I fear his intentions are not as virtuous as you suppose. He did not save Rome that day, the 13th Vendémiaire."

And the old member of the Committee of Public Safety left the room, slamming the door behind him.

Barras, lifting a portière, came to Josephine smiling, and said, "What happy chance, fair viscountess, draws you aside from pleasure to surprise me so agreeably with a private interview ?"

Barras was really uneasy. He had not disdained to show passing favors to the seductive creole, but he never meant to make lasting those relations which, on both sides, were only occasional and capricious. Josephine, poor, uninfluential, alone, was happy to have held for a moment this victor, this so-called noble, generous, amiable, able to be of service to her—though not known as her protector—at least if she were careful. He, on his part, impatient to renew the old-style ways, was flattered by this conquest of a member of the aristocracy, this widow of a president of the Constituency, general-in-chief of the glorious army of the Rhine. But there now remained between them only the memory of a pleasant intimacy, the savor of passions long since grown cold.

Josephine, a little troubled, confessed the object of her visit.

"Somebody wants me to marry, my dear Director ; what do you think of it ? "

"I think you would make a man very happy. May I know who the man is, whom you have transfixed with those eyes ? "

"You know him, Barras ! It is the General Vendémiaire !" said Josephine, smiling.

"Bonaparte ? A man of promise—an artilleryman of eminent ability. If you had seen him, as I did, on horseback, in the alley Dauphin, turning his cannon against the sectionists on the roads of Saint-Roch, you would know that so brave a man cannot be other than an excellent husband ! Oh, he is intrepid ! I was by his side, and those sectionists kept up a devilish fire," said Barras, in a low, even tone.

"He is good," said Josephine. "He will be a father to Alexandre de Beauharnais's children, and a husband to his widow."

"That is laudable ; but do you love him ? "

"I will be open with you, Barras ; no, I do not love him—love——"

"Do you dislike him ? Lady, it would not pay to pretend."

"I neither love nor hate him—I am in a state of indecision which I do not like. Such a state as the pious—you know, in Martinique, my home, they are very religious—find very bad for the soul."

"One must consider one's body, too, when it comes to marriage."

"Love is a cult, too, Barras. It excites faith ; one

must have counsels, and exhortations to believe, to be fervent—that is why I ask yours. To make up my mind has ever been a hard task for my careless nature—I have all my life found it easier to follow the bidding of others.”

“Then, I must tell you, marry the general?”

“Only advise me. I admire his courage. He saved society that 13th Vendemiaire.”

“He protected the Convention, put down the insurgents who wanted to overthrow the Republic, and gained, alone, in Paris, a battle in the streets worth all the regular battles.”

“He is a superior man. I appreciate the extent of his knowledge in all things of which he speaks—and speaks well; the quickness of his mind makes him understand another’s thought, almost before it is spoken; but, I confess to you, I am a little frightened at the empire he seems to want to exercise over all who come within his reach.”

“He has a compelling eye. The first time I saw him,” said Barras, gravely, “I was strangely struck with his appearance. I saw a man, below medium height and very thin. He looked like an ascetic escaped from his solitudes; his hair, cut very strangely, hung round his ears, and down to his shoulders. Oh, he is not one of those fops of the “jeunesse dorée,” he wore a long, straight coat, buttoned to the top, ornamented with a meagre embroidery of gold; in his hat was a tricolored feather. At first, his face did not seem a fine one to me; but his pronounced features,

his quick and fiery eye, his alert and animated movements, evidenced an ardent spirit; his large forehead showed him a deep thinker. He spoke little. He is a man, Josephine; a man of honesty and valor who may to-morrow be a hero. Since he wants you, take him. It is a friend's advice I give you—believe me."

"Then you advise me to marry him?"

"Yes—and in time, you will love him."

"You think so? I am a little afraid of him."

"You are not the only one. All my colleagues are, too. Carnot, a Terrorist, a man who drinks blood, a companion of Robespierre, even he detests him, because he is jealous of him and fears him."

"If he intimidates the directors, think what an impression he makes on a woman."

"You will grow used to it; besides, he loves you—you said so?"

"I believe he is very much in love with me; but, Barras—between friends, there can exist such confidences as this—having passed my first youth, can I hope to keep for a long time the general's impulsive tenderness, which is like an access of delirium?"

"Do not fret about the future."

"But if, when we are married, he should cease to love me, would not his faithlessness be a reproach to me? He might repent of his infatuation. He might awake from his intoxication. Would he not regret a more brilliant marriage with a younger woman? What should I do then? What should I say? Tears? Heaven help me from tears!"

"Do not foresee misfortune. Why suffer in anticipation? Bonaparte is devoted to high honor. Are you superstitious? "He has confided to me that he has a star, and that he believes——"

"At Martinique, a negro enchantr^{ess}, whose local prophecies were all realized, told me I should become a queen. I can't imagine Bonaparte a king, and myself sharing his throne——"

"You may share with him the glory which crowns the commander-in-chief of the fairest army of the Republic!"

"What do you mean, my dear Barras?" said Josephine, surprised, and remembering the argument with Carnot, which she had overheard, and of which Bonaparte was the object.

"I mean that you will be one of the happiest of women, as you are one of the fairest queens of beauty in our Republic, if you marry Bonaparte; and as a wedding gift, I, your old friend, knowing the general who put down the insurgents so promptly, will give you a fair jewel."

"Really? What? An agraffe of gold and diamonds, like Madame Tallien's?"

"More than that—the command of the army of Italy. But I shall be missed from the fête," said Barras, enjoying her astonishment. "Take my arm, and let us return to the salon. I want to be the first to congratulate Bonaparte on his marriage and his new command."

And, with the widow Beauharnais, speechless at the

decision which had been made for her, and the favor the all-powerful director meant to show her future lord, Barras re-entered majestically into the halls, ablaze with light, flowers and women ; on his arm was she who was soon to become Madame Bonaparte.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SWORD FROM THE PYRAMIDS.

BONAPARTE was named, February 23, 1796, General of the Army of Italy. Carnot had given in to Barras. Reubell's was the only opposing voice, and his colleagues overruled him.

March 9th, a few days after this, the marriage of the general and the widow Beauharnais was celebrated.

All this portion of Bonaparte's life was one fever of love.

He literally adored Josephine. Prostrate, ecstatic, absorbed, like a Carmelite before a divine revelation, he smothered her with caresses, embraced her wildly, flung himself upon her and took her in his arms. Like a barbarian, pillaging a palace, he cast himself upon those gauzy draperies, in which, in memory of tropical nights, Josephine loved to array her charms. He caught, tore even to shreds, all which made an obstacle to the impetuosity of his trembling hands and his eager lips. All the exuberance of his exceptional nature flamed at the animal possession of her, like a charge of

cavalry. He loved—he knew a woman on terms of intimacy for the first time, or almost the first, and the reserve of accumulated passion burst with the violence of a river, long repressed when its bounds are broken. In that vigorous expansion, that satisfying of youthful desire, in that double joy of satisfied self-love, and flattered vanity, mingled the joy of an end attained, of a dream accomplished, and amid these intoxications Bonaparte seemed to forget the way of war, of glory, of the power which had hitherto governed his heart. He seemed a changed man. He trembled, he talked, he laughed, he wept. He fell, in that possession of Josephine, into madness and intoxication.

The celebration of the marriage came—and soon an end of his honeymoon, all too short.

Two days after the official ceremony was over, he started for Italy. He was off on the road to glory, and could stop at the inns of love only in passing between victories, until that day when fate made him stumble against the dazzling couch of the Arch-duchess Marie-Louise of Austria.

In the marriage certificate, Bonaparte gallantly, to lessen the discrepancy of age, made himself two years older; and Josephine, through coquetry, produced a certificate of birth, in which she made herself four years younger. That foible of a pretty woman, desirous to appear as young as her young husband, was destined to have some terrible consequences for Josephine, at the time of divorce, when the legality of the procedure was questioned.

Bonaparte was burning with the fever of passion, as he passed through Italy, where prodigious triumphs awaited him.

He never let a day pass without addressing to his Josephine amorous epistles, a little emphatic in tone, which suggest the pomp of Saint-Preux writing to Julie. Weary with travel, lacking sleep, scarcely descending from his horse after giving consideration to the position of to-morrow's battle, the young general, amid ever-increasing preoccupation and danger, never failed to fill a sheet with loving words, witnessing the intensity of his affection, which a courier, galloping night and day, carried to Paris, along with the account of battles won, and captured standards, which were laid upon the altar of the country, in a magnificent ceremony presided over by the directors.

And that feast of Victory which he organized from his tent pitched upon the plateau of Rivoli, that day of patriotic joy which he gave to Paris, when his friend Junot presented himself before the Convention with the captured Austrian standards, the idea came to him to start that theatrical scene in honor of his Josephine.

She was the queen of France, that day, the insignificant and sensual creole. Before the troops, in face of all the assembled people, amid the sound of cannon and bells, proclaiming to the city the Halleluia of victory, she paraded on the arm of Junot, in whom the people hailed the representative, friend, and companion of that hero whose name soared to the sky, shouted by a hundred thousand voices.

Carnot, at the centre of the altar in the Champ de Mars, pronounced a harangue in which he compared the young victor to Epaminondas, and to Miltiades ; Lebrun, the poet, led a chorus who sang—

Intoxication comes from glory, as from wine.
Our laurels won, great Bacchus stands above.
So drink to Victory divine,
The Frenchman's faithful love.

Thus did all Paris do honor to the Citizeness Bonaparte and her absent husband, who, giving the order to march upon Mantua and take it, was about to achieve another triumph.

Josephine, the very evening of that apotheosis where she had figured as goddess, having dismissed a young actor who had attended her for some hours, spent her time with a handsome second-lieutenant of hussars, a M. Charles, to whom she gave that which money-lenders and merchants had left her of the money Bonaparte had sent her. That was her sort of gratitude to the army.

Josephine not only deceived her young husband, who was so ardent, so glorious, so much coveted by all women, and whom she did not even love, but she did not even pretend to have for him that regard which conventionality demands. She had long refused to join Bonaparte in Italy, where he ardently desired her presence. Bonaparte, his brain excited by privation, at last became almost foolish ; he talked of giving up his command, of laying down his commission, so as to

return to Paris, to be near his Josephine, if she did not come to him.

At length she consented to leave Paris, which she loved, and to rejoin him. Later, in the course of this *talé*, we will recount Napoleon's divorce, we will return to his queen, of whom poets, dramatists, novelists, have written so pityingly as to deceive posterity.

Napoleon was not betrayed by the marshals whom he had loaded with honors and wealth. The two women whom he called to share the glory of his name were two infamous wretches; yes, even that bestial daughter of emperors, that Marie-Louise, was she not more excusable? She was not one of the members of the degenerate period of the Directory, and one cannot expect that she should have so fully understood the crowned soldier, who conquered her, sword in hand, and entered her chamber as a vanquished capital.

After the Italian campaign and the treaty of Campo Formio, Bonaparte, victor and peacemaker, began to dream again of the East.

It was not now the prick of poverty, or of ambition, that spurred him, nor yet the desire of an ardent wife eager for his advancement, who would bring him his desires. The East was not only a field for conquest and glory, in this reawakened dream. It was also a haven—a resting-place.

Returning to Paris December 5, 1797, after the ratification of the treaty of Campo Formio, and the signing of the return of Mayence and Manheim to

France (that is, the Rhineland), he soon learned, in his little abode in the Rue Chantierine, flatteringly renamed Rue de la Victoire, the dangers of popularity and the perils of his exceptional position in the Republic.

He had to be present at all fêtes in honor of the victorious army. He found himself a hero. Everywhere he was hailed with a flutter of flags: Barras, and even Talleyrand, praised him soberly, Bonaparte answered vaguely. In his reply, only one sentence was clear; and that almost threatening. "When the welfare of the French people is established upon the best organized laws, then all Europe will become free," said he energetically. Thus was the storm prophesied. The thunder-clap of the 18th Brumaire was quietly announced in those words big with fate.

Bonaparte tried to free himself from the ovations which pursued him. Carnot's place was vacant at the Institute. It was offered to him, and, when seen at the public ceremonies, he appeared to be overwhelmed by his honors. He seemed, thus, less a victorious soldier than a deep student.

It was proposed to present him with the Château de Chambord, that marvel of Renaissance art, as a national gift. He refused it. He declined all distinctions. He would only accept the title of Commander-in-chief of the army for the conquest of England.

He started a project of descent upon Great Britain. In reality he sought a means of striking the great enemy of France and the Revolution where she was most vul-

nerable—in her colonies. So he developed, in his burning brain, a gigantic and chimerical plan for conquering not only Egypt, but Syria, Palestine, and Turkey, and of entering as a conqueror into Constantinople, and thence to overrun Europe, adding to his army Fellahs, Bedouins, Turks, and people from Asia Minor; he would fight all armies, change the face of things, and, before his conquering sword, all sovereigns and all nations should bow.

Thus, among his charts and maps of Egypt, did Bonaparte weave a fantastic dream of a vast western empire. At the same time his cool reason counselled departure. He knew well that, when he was gone, the Directory could not but make mistakes, the generals could know but defeats. His need of activity stimulated him to seek new fields of glory. He reminded himself that the mob is fickle, and soon tires of hero-worship. "When they have seen me three times," he said, "they won't look at me any more."

A conspiracy hastened his departure. The jealousy of the directors was revealed. Reubell, an honest man, but an imbecile, had, one day, when he spoke of resigning, handed him a pen at once to sign the same. They sought for opportunities to accuse him of mis-using moneys in Italy. The directors seemed to forget that they had urged the general to draw from Italy money, pictures, statuary, and that every month, the victorious Bonaparte had sent to Moreau and his less fortunate colleagues in the army of the Rhine, subsidies to pay their soldiers.

On May 19, 1798, he left Toulon. Before setting out he addressed to his troops a proclamation full of hope, in which he pictured to them the splendor of the promised land.

"Soldiers," he said, "you know you have not yet done enough for your country, nor has the country done enough for you. I am about to take you to a land where, by your future exploits, you shall surpass those which to-day astonish your admirers; and when you shall render to your country such service as she has a right to expect from an invincible army, I promise to each soldier, on his return from this expedition, he shall have the wherewithal to purchase six acres of land!"

The campaign in Egypt began with its fabled marches—the soldiers lightly asked, when they struck the desert of Gizeh, if it was there that the general wanted to allot the promised acres—the seeming victories, the maritime disasters, the great revenge of Aboukir, it was like a tale of the Arabian Nights, holding the public charmed, waiting for the end.

But on October 15, 1799, there came great news: Bonaparte had embarked at Fréjus. He was coming to Paris amid universal acclamations. He was the hero, the saviour, the god! France gave herself to him, in one mighty rush, like an actress swooning in the arms of a man in a play.

Had he, in returning so suddenly, foreseen his reversal of the government, his ability to substitute his will for the existing Constitution? Never! He was a great dreamer. He had dreamed of the possibility of

a change as in the reconstruction of a Carlovingian empire. But he held these Utopian schemes subordinate to actualities.

The 18th Brumaire was commanded by public opinion and executed by Bonaparte. The Directory had now fallen ; France was tired of that dictatorship of incapacity. She did not know what she wanted, but she wanted something. Had Bonaparte not attempted the *coup*, Augereau, Bernadotte, or Moreau would have done it.

Bonaparte had surrounded himself with a brilliant and valorous staff ; Lannes, Murat, Berthier, Marmont ; legislators, with a knowledge of jurisprudence, like Cambacérès ; and fishers in troubled waters like Fouché and Talleyrand. His two brothers, Lucien and Joseph, worked actively for him, especially Lucien, who was a member of the Cinq-Cents. The result was achieved, though without great precaution.

The 18th Brumaire, November 9, 1799, at six in the morning, all the generals and superior officers, convened by Bonaparte, were assembled in his house in the Rue de la Victoire, under pretext of a review. There were the six adjutants of the National Guard, and at their head, Moreau, Macdonald, Serrurier, Andréassv, Berthier, and the prudent Bernadotte, in civilian costumes.

A single important general was absent. Bonaparte asked for him uneasily.

"Where is Lefebvre ?" he asked of Marmont.
"Why is he not here with us ?"

Just then, General Lefebvre was announced.

He had made great strides, this husband of Sans-Gêne.

The French guardsman, the lieutenant in the militia, the captain at Verdun and in the Army of the North, had become a general in charge of the 17th military division ; in other words, the governor of Paris.

From being captain in the 13th Light Infantry at Jemmapes, he had become chief of a battalion, then brigadier-general in the army of the Moselle, under his friend Hoche, on January 10, 1794, he had been made a general, and commanded the immortal army of Sambre-et-Meuse, at the death of his friend Hoche. At Fleurus, and at Alten Kirchen, he had behaved like a hero.

After commanding the Army of the Danube he had been a candidate for the Directory, but had been put aside on account of his pronounced republican opinions, and his military occupation.

As Commander-in-chief of the Army of Paris, he was perhaps the most indispensable man to the fulfilment of Bonaparte's plans.

He had not been warned of the projects of the future master of France.

At midnight, learning that movements of troops were afoot, he had mounted and ridden through the city.

Surprised to see, without his orders, the cavalry ready to depart for an unknown destination, he had questioned the commander, Sebastian, sharply. The latter sent him to Bonaparte.

So Lefebvre arrived at Bonaparte's in a bad humor.

Bonaparte, seeing him, ran to him with outstretched arms.

"Ah, dear old Lefebvre," he cried, familiarly, "how are you? And how is your wife, the good Catharine? Ever with heart in her hand and her answer ready? Madame Bonaparte complains that she sees too little of her."

"My wife is well, I thank you, General," said Lefebvre coldly, "but that is not the question——"

Bonaparte interrupted him.

"Look, Lefebvre, dear old comrade," said he, with the affectionate tone of good-fellowship he could assume on occasion—"you are one of the props of the Republic; would you let it fall from its station through the hands of lawyers? Look, here is the sword I carried from the Pyramids, accept it as a token of my esteem and confidence."

And he handed to Lefebvre, hesitating, yet flattered, a magnificent sabre, with a jewelled hilt, the cimeter of Mourad Bey.

"You are right," said Lefebvre, suddenly calmed, "let us throw the lawyers into the river!"

He took the Sword of the Pyramids.

The 18th Brumaire was over.

The evening of that decisive day, which changed once more the destiny of France, Lefebvre, embracing Catharine, half drew from its scabbard Bonaparte's gift, and said, "Look, wife, it is a Turkish sabre, good only on parade or to rap over the backs of advo-

cates. We will leave it in its scabbard. It will simply serve to remind us of the friendship of General Bonaparte who started from as lowly a place as we, sweet Catharine——"

"Will you not use this fine sword?" Sans-Gêne asked.

"No! To defend my country, to strike Austrians, Prussians, English, or any one else, to use wherever Bonaparte may choose to lead us; ay, were it to God's very thunder, I have mine, sweet, my sword of Sambret-Meuse; and it is good enough!"

And General Lefebvre, drawing to him the wife he loved as well as on the 10th of August, kissed her fervently; and his kiss was as honest and as pure as his dear old sword.

BOOK THIRD,

LA MARECHALE.

CHAPTER I.

MADAME LA MARÉCHALE TAKES A DANCING LESSON.

SOFTLY, gently, the door of a sleeping apartment at Saint-Cloud was opened. A maid peeped into the room, and finally entered, going up to a magnificent mahogany bed, crowned with a coronet, whence fell two great flowered curtains. In soft tones she called : Madame la Maréchale ! Madame la Maréchale ! It is ten o'clock."

A strong, rather hoarse voice came from underneath the bedclothes.

"Heavens ! One can't even sleep soundly in this pasteboard palace."

"Pardon, Madame la Maréchale ; but Madame la Maréchale asked to be wakened at ten o'clock."

"Ten o'clock already ! What a lazy wretch I am ! I had different habits in the days gone by, when I was a washeawoman. I rose early—later, too, in the regi-

ment, beside the canteen, I did not wait for the morning drum-call to sound twice before I bestirred myself. But now I am Madame la Maréchale, I can't stir betimes. Come, quick, Lise, my dressing-gown."

And she whom the maid had called Madame la Maréchale jumped out of bed, swearing like a trooper because she failed to find the hose she had thrown down the night before.

She was not an easy mistress to dress, being very impatient. She who was now la Maréchale Lefebvre still kept the looks, the familiarities, the gestures, and the general good-fellowship, which she had shown in the Saint-Roch quarter as laundress, in the great days of the Revolution, and in the armies of the North, of Sambre-et-Meuse, and of the Moselle, where she had served as cantinière and had gained the title of Madame Sans-Gêne.

The course of events had meanwhile changed not only the face of the earth but human destinies as well.

The little artillery-officer of Toulon, the needy client of the laundress of the Rue des Orties-Saint-Honoré, had become General-in-chief, First Consul, and, later, Emperor.

His throne was ablaze with glory, and at its foot humbled kings fell prostrate.

France, amid the sound of bugles and the flutter of banners, showed herself among the nations of Europe, as a vast camp, whence radiated the superb light of the sun of Austerlitz.

Like the lean and care-worn officer, who had pawned

his watch the morning of August 10th, those who had figured with him in the prologue of that gigantic drama had risen until they were scarce recognizable.

The prediction of the magician Fortunatus was almost realized for Lefebvre and his wife.

Rising rapidly, the former sergeant of the French Guard, more fortunate than his companion Hoche, had been spared by war. On the 18th Brumaire he was general of a division, in command of Paris, consecrated to the fortunes of Bonaparte.

Nor did he ever lose for a moment the favor of the First Consul, or the Emperor.

In 1804, Napoleon had restored the old but abolished dignity of the Marshals of France.

Lefebvre was one of the first to be invested with the decorative title. At the same time he occupied a senator's chair.

Lefebvre, if he was the least able of the senators, had, nevertheless, Napoleon's esteem. The latter considered him the bravest of all men, sword in hand ; but also the most ignorant in the use of the pen of all his generals.

When plans were under discussion, the impatient Lefebvre was wont to throw aside papers, plans, maps, of which he knew nothing, and to cry, "Let me do something ! Let me go, with my grenadiers, to meet the enemy, and I'll give you my decision."

And he always made his way.

It is true, however, that he was ever docile and respectful toward his emperor, his god, and that he

executed to the letter the orders of the master of war.

Napoleon schemed and Lefebvre executed. He was as a ball in a cannon. Where the Emperor threw him he went straight ahead with irresistible force, under a powerful impulse, and nothing withstood him.

It was he who commanded the Imperial Foot-Guards, tall as a legion of giants.

But Lefebvre was not only a great warrior ; he was also an exceptional husband.

Toward Catharine he was ever the same, despite the change of uniform ; and the great medal of the Legion of Honor which hung on his breast had nowise altered the true pulses of his heart.

They laughed a little in the Imperial Court, at the conjugal fidelity of these two good people, but Napoleon, who upheld an apparent severity of manners, congratulated Lefebvre and his wife on the excellent example they set to the households of the officers, an example, later, little followed, chiefly in his own family.

The Emperor meantime had not failed to make some remarks to Lefebvre on the manners and ways of his lady.

"Listen to me," he said ; "try to make your wife understand that she must not lift her skirts when she enters the Empress's apartments, as if she were preparing to jump a ditch ; tell her, also, to use no oaths, and to pronounce her f's and her p's on all occasions. Ours are no longer the times of Hébert, and my court

is not that of Père Duchesne. Ah, one more suggestion. Are you listening, Lefebvre?"

"Yes, sire," said the marshal; for though he recognized the truth of the Emperor's words it pained him to hear them.

"Well, your wife is ever disposed to bandy words with my sisters—especially with Elisa. This must not be—one doesn't like constant bickerings among women——"

"Sire, Madame Bacciochi reproaches my wife with her humble birth—with her republican and patriotic opinions—nevertheless, sire, we are republicans, you and I."

"Surely," said Napoleon, smiling at the naïve confidence of Lefebvre, who, like most of the old soldiers of '92, still fancied he served the Republic in bowing to the Emperor.

"Lefebvre, old friend," said Napoleon, "tell the *maréchale* that I trust she will not in future quarrel with my sisters."

"Sire, I shall report your Majesty's remarks to the *maréchale*. She will remember them, I promise you."

"If she can," murmured the Emperor. "I do not demand the impossible. Early habits will cling."

He stopped in his rapid march up and down his room, and muttered:

"What folly, to marry when one is a sergeant."

Then, anxiously, he added: "Ah, I made almost the same mistake as Lefebvre. He wedded a laun-

dress, and I—hem—there is one remedy—divorce—but——”

As if to change the current of his thought he suddenly drew from the pocket of his white waistcoat an oval snuff-box, and inhaled the odor of its contents. That was his way of taking snuff. He never smoked.

Having smelled his tobacco, Napoleon, as if he had made a serious resolution, said to Lefebvre: “Your wife must take lessons of Despréaux, the famous dancing-master. He, only, has conserved the beautiful traditions of true elegance and the etiquette of the old court.”

Lefebvre bowed, and, having left the Emperor, hastened to summon Master Despréaux.

Such a personage as he was, this master of dancing and etiquette!

Small, slight, agile, graceful, light, powdered and perfumed, he had pirouetted through the Terror without being stained with gore.

And when the tumult was over, and pleasure opened once more the doors of salons still cooled by sighs and saddened by missing faces, then Despréaux became a person of importance.

It was the coming of Despréaux to the palace which made la Maréchale Lefebvre order her maid to wake and dress her at ten o'clock, though she had returned late from a soirée given by Josephine.

She found the professor of graces in the salon, limbering up his joints, and bowing before a glass.

“Ah, there you are, Monsieur Despréaux, and how is

your good health?" said Catharine brusquely, taking the hand he never dreamed of extending, and shaking it vigorously.

Despréaux blushed, stammered, and looked down, for the maréchale had interrupted him in the second movement of his best bow; he drew back his hand from the grasp of Sans Gêne, and, readjusting the frills of his cuffs, said dryly:

"I have the honor to await Madame la Maréchale's orders."

"Well, little one," said Catharine, leaning on the edge of the table, "this is the case. The Emperor thinks that we have not at his court sufficiently fine manners; he wants us to acquire them—you know what he wants, my boy?"

Despréaux, shocked to the heart by the tone of familiarity, replied, in his weak voice, choked with emotion, "His Majesty is right to desire in his empire the flower and charm of distinction, and the elegance of a polished court. I am, Madame la Maréchale, the respectful interpreter of his wishes. May I ask what you desire specially to learn in the great art to give pleasure to his Majesty?"

"That's just the point, lad. There is to be a great ball at the court on Tuesday. They are to dance the gavotte. It seems it was danced the days of the tyrants. The Emperor wants us to know the gavotte. You have the article, it seems; hand it over!"

"Madame la Maréchale, the gavotte is a difficult thing—it needs inclination. Perhaps I shall not be

able to teach you that dance which was a special favorite with Madame the Dauphiness, to whom I had the honor to be dancing-master," said Despréaux with assumed modesty.

"We can try, anyway. Oh, if it were only the Emperor, I wouldn't bother much. He did not care whether or not I could dance a gavotte when I washed his clothes. But it is Lefebvre who asks it—and you see, boy, what my husband wishes, that I wish also. Ah, that is it, Lefebvre and I are like two fingers on the same hand, and we let the young sprigs who wait upon the princesses laugh at us because we are true to our marriage vows. Come, my man, ready for the gavotte. Tell me where I must put my feet!"

And Sans-Gêne tapped the floor twice with her foot, in military fashion, as a call.

Despréaux shrugged his shoulders slightly, and sighed.

In his heart the aristocratic dancer deplored the vulgarity of the times, and his necessity to teach good manners and dances like the gavotte to retired laundresses, become, by the grace of victory, great ladies in the land.

He approached Catharine impatiently and said: "Madame, did you ever dance?"

"Yes—long ago—at Vaux Hall!"

"I do not know the place," said Despréaux, pursing up his lips. "What did you dance? The parané, the trémitz, the minuet, the monaco?"

"No. La fricassée."

Despréaux shuddered.

"A dance of porters and laundresses," he murmured.

"I danced it first with Lefebvre. That was how we became acquainted."

The professor of elegance shook his head mournfully, as if to say, "Upon what evil days I am fallen, I the dancing-master of Madame the Dauphiness!"

And, with an air of concentrated sadness, he began to teach Catharine Sans-Gêne the elements of the great dance which Napoleon wanted to replace in the festivities of his court.

CHAPTER II.

THE THUNDER-BOLT.

CATHARINE tried to extend her arms, to turn and bend, to draw her foot back, in time to the music drawn from the little violin in Despréaux's hands as he played an arietta from Paësiello. At this precise moment the door was pushed open rudely and Lefebvre entered.

He was in full uniform, with all his insignia. His great plumed hat was in his hand. The badge of the Legion of Honor sparkled on his breast, and across his gold-embroidered uniform he wore the red sash of his rank.

He seemed violently excited.

"Aha!" he said, as he strode into the room, and like a drunken man, haggard and convulsed, he threw his hat on the floor, and shouted aloud, "*Vive l'Empereur!*"

Then he rushed to his wife, kissed her, and held her close to him.

"What, in Heaven's name, has happened?" inquired Catharine.

Despréaux, interrupting the easy bow he was trying to show to his refractory pupil, advanced and said: "Monsieur le Maréchal, is the Emperor dead?"

Lefebvre's only reply was a vigorous kick which struck the dancing-master in the back and made him pirouette in a fashion not recognized by the rules of his art."

Despréaux stood the shock, and saluting with his best grace, asked: "Did Monsieur le Maréchal speak?"

"Come, Lefebvre, be calm. Tell us what has happened. Despréaux asks if the Emperor is dead. That is impossible."

"No—it is not that—the Emperor is not dead; he cannot die; he will never die, our Emperor. It is something else, Catharine—we are to go."

"Where, my husband?—I should say Monsieur le Maréchal," said Catharine, looking ironically at Despréaux.

"I know not where—but it is necessary for us to go—and that quickly—I believe to Berlin."

"Is Berlin far off?" asked Catharine naïvely, for she was not well versed in geography.

"I don't know," said Lefebvre; "but nothing is far for the Emperor."

"And how soon do we start?"

"To-morrow."

"So soon?"

"The Emperor is in a hurry. The Prussians are in arms against us. The Emperor has never yet injured them. They came with the Austrians, the English, the Russians, the Spaniards, with everybody, and invaded France. They were pardoned. It was believed the Emperor loved them—he has always spoken feelingly of one called Goethe, a lad who wrote for the papers. He says if he had been a Frenchman he would have been made a count, as one called Corneille, from Rouen, should have been a prince—but I believe he's dead."

"So the Emperor wants to fight the Prussians!"

"Yes; he has astonished us all by telling us it is a hard job. For us, Prussians are naught. The Emperor pretends that this war will be one of glory: he knows best. However, I dislike to have to use my steel upon an insignificant people like the Prussians. There is no glory to be gained by routing such ignoble enemies."

"Your pardon, Monsieur le Maréchal, Frederick the Great was a Prussian, and his nation celebrates annually the fête of Rosbach," Despréaux ventured to remark, as he widened the distance between him and Lefebvre for fear of a second encounter with the maréchal's boot.

"Rosbach? Don't know it! That must be ancient

history—before the Emperor's day. Where he is, the victory always is his also."

"That is true," said Catharine, "what a man! But, Lefebvre, may not I go with you?"

"If you like—as far as the frontier. The Emperor is going to take the Empress. It is simply a walk over in uniform—a little walk. Ah, Catharine, my sweet, how like a thunder-clap in a summer's day is this sudden decision of war. But let us see to means for our departure. Have you seen Henriot?"

"Henriot is waiting for you—as you ordered."

"That is right. I shall present him to the Emperor; perhaps this war, so suddenly declared, will serve to advance him. Go and find our dear Henriot."

Catharine rose to comply. Despréaux started to offer his services.

He rushed to the door in advance of Catharine.

"Pardon, fair lady," said he.

He had no time to finish.

A violent kick interrupted him, and Lefebvre growled, "You idiot! We are among military folk here, you little acrobat."

Despréaux left, rubbing his posterior parts, cursing in his heart such military customs, and sighing for the happy era when he taught the principles of stately courtesies to Madame the Dauphiness.

Catharine ushered in a young under-lieutenant.

Lefebvre took his hand quickly, saying, "Henriot, I have news!"

"News of what kind, godfather?"

“War.”

“But where are we to fight?”

“Presumptuous youth! Why, lad, you’re not sure of being there. I must see the Emperor. Do you think it’s such an easy thing to be allowed to die for the Emperor? I trust, however, you will attain to that honor.”

Henriot, overjoyed, cried, “Thanks, dear godfather. When will you present me to the Emperor?”

“At once. There is to be a review of the Imperial Guard, and you can come with me. Madame la Maréchale will go and talk with the Empress.”

“Yes, I shall go at once to Josephine. Ah, my little Henriot, I promise you you shall go.”

A drum-call sounded under the windows.

“Let us hurry,” said Lefebvre, “the Emperor is mounting his horse; the review will begin at once.”

And he hurried Henriot away, while Catharine called loudly for Lise and two other waiting-women, who came running at her call, and succeeded in arraying their mistress to meet the Empress.

It was the close of September, 1806.

The French empire then comprised two-thirds of Europe. Napoleon, on a throne built of trophies and standards, ruled people and kings. The members of his family were also now in exalted positions. Joseph Bonaparte was King of Naples and Sicily; Louis was King of Holland; Elisa, whom we met first as the girl from Saint-Cyr, received the principalities of Lugues and Piombino; Caroline, Madame Murat, had become

Grand-Duchess of Berg. Pauline, the widow of General Leclerc, had married Prince Borghese, and was Duchess of Guastalla. Yet there was little family concord. All the Emperor's sisters were jealous of one another, and complained constantly. Not one was satisfied with the place given her by their all-powerful brother.

"It would seem," Napoleon once said, half-smiling, half-displeased, "to listen to their complaints, as though I had defrauded them of part of their inheritance from the late king, our father."

When the Maréchale Lefebvre entered the Empress's salon, she found the entire court in high excitement.

The news of the declaration of war was already known. Every one questioned anxiously when the Emperor would decide to start.

They all turned to the Empress, to learn from her Napoleon's intentions.

"But, I tell you, I don't know," she said, forcing herself to hide beneath a smile her great anxiety. "His Majesty has simply told me to be ready—I am to go with him as far as Mayence."

"Lefebvre told me," said Catharine, "that I, too, was to go. It gives me pleasure to be again among soldiers. Ah, your Majesty, one grows stiff and rusty in a palace. You will sleep well on a soldier's cot. And to-morrow, —or is it to-night?"

"Who can say?" said the Empress, shaking her head. "You know the Emperor's ways. He settles things quickly, quietly, and as though he were going at once. No one may tarry. Every one is at his post.

Then he can, if he likes, declare war, and start at once. He told me to be ready. I am ready. When his Majesty gives the signal I shall go down, and enter the coach with him—that's all I know !”

“Oh, we are used to drum-calls,” said the *maréchale* ; “such trifles do not worry us. But I should like to know if your Majesty has seen the Emperor this morning, and if he is in a good humor ?”

“You have a favor to ask of him ?”

“Yes, madame, I have a godson, young Henriot, a gentle youth, who, having attained his majority, and under-lieutenancy, wants permission to go with Lefebvre.”

“If it would give you pleasure, my dear lady, tell your godson I will take him into my escort.”

“Thanks, madame ; but it is on the field and not in the hall that Henriot wants to gain advancement. It is not in vain that he is Lefebvre's godson !”

“Well, he shall go ! He shall have an opportunity to die, if he's so anxious for it.”

“Your Majesty is too good,” said Catharine, enraptured at the promise. At last her adopted child, the son of Neipperg and Blanche de Laveline, was going to gain glory and fight for the Emperor.

In the court below the Emperor was receiving the grenadiers of the Guard.

Beside him stood the generals destined to command his great army : Lefebvre, Bernadotte, Ney, Lannes, Davoust, Augereau, and Soult. Mortier, who commanded the Westphalian reserve, and Murat, the

cavalry chief, were the only ones absent in that line of heroes.

After having inspected the soldiers with his usual care, the Emperor approached the drum-major of the grenadiers, who, tall and straight, stood waiting to give the signal.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"La Violette, sire," answered the giant in a soft voice.

"Where have you served?"

"Everywhere, sire."

"Good," said the Emperor, who loved short answers.

"Do you know Berlin?"

"No, sire."

"Would you like to go there?"

"I shall go wherever my Emperor wishes."

"Well, La Violette, get ready your drum and drumsticks; in a month from now you shall be first to enter, with head erect, the Prussian capital."

"We shall enter, sire."

"La Violette, how tall are you?" asked the Emperor, regarding, with some astonishment, the former aide-cantinière who seemed to have grown taller since he had become drum-major of the Grenadiers.

"Five feet eleven inches, sire."

"You are tall as a poplar."

"And you, Emperor, are great as the whole world," said La Violette, beside himself with joy at thus conversing with the Emperor, and unable to forego the expression of his enthusiasm.

Napoleon smiled at the compliment, and turning to

Lefebvre said, "You must remind me, Marshal, in proper time, of this drum-major."

Lefebvre bowed. The Emperor continued his inspection ; then, at a signal from the marshal, the drums beat, the trumpets sounded, and the grenadiers of the Guard passed, superb and warlike before their god, who stood with his hands clasped behind him.

And when the drums ceased, a great shout arose from that forest of men, great and strong as oak trees, many of whom were destined never to return from Prussia, whither they were about to be led by their master, the terrible butcher.

"Vive l'Empereur !"

"I believe my cousin, the King of Prussia, will soon be sorry he provoked my wrath. With such men I might war against the Almighty and his legions of archangels, commanded by St. Michael and St. George. Marshal, go, embrace your wife ; we leave here to-night."

CHAPTER III.

LEFEBVRE TRIES TO UNDERSTAND.

ON the 8th of October a French army, under Murat, opened fire upon Schleitz.

On the 10th was the engagement at Saalfeld, where Prince Louis of Prussia was killed, and whence Marshal Lannes marched to Jena.

On October 13th, Napoleon arrived at Jena, and the

spot where his tent was pitched was called Napoleonsberg.

From his headquarters he sent Rapp, his aide-de-camp, to find Marshal Lefebvre.

The latter arrived and entered quietly, his uniform torn and the gilt on his cloak blackened with powder.

Napoleon went directly to him, and shook his hand heartily. "Well, dear old Lefebvre! We have made a good thing of this. Do you not think so?"

"Sire, with you and my grenadiers, we could always do well!"

"Yes, your Imperial Foot-Guards are admirable."

"The Imperial Cavalry Guard, which Bessières commanded, did well, too," said Lefebvre, who was exceptionally free from jealousy of other marshals. He loved them all except Bernadotte, in whom his honest nature suspected treason.

"You are all admirable!" said Napoleon, "and you may say to your grenadiers to-night, 'Soldiers, the Emperor is pleased with you.'"

"Thanks, thanks, sire! That will be all-sufficient for them. Do you know that the Guard covered forty leagues at a single march, speeding all the way? Oh, sire, you gave me, long ago, your sabre from the Pyramids. You would not do ill to give me another," said Lefebvre familiarly, "for mine is used up. See, it is like a cork-screw!"

"Well, well! In place of your sabre you shall have a broadsword. Now you have a baton—you shall stride on again!"

"I do not understand," said Lefebvre, whose powers of induction were not well developed. "Sire, explain to me."

"See, you have a marshal's baton."

"Yes—but the sword?"

"You will know by and by. See, here is a fine piece of work, done by a man of great merit, General Chasseloup."

"Ah, yes," said Lefebvre, indifferently regarding the plan before him; he was as little interested in geographical charts as in Hebrew.

Napoleon continued, "It is the plan of the town of Dantzic, with a study of distances, heights and depressions of the entire place."

"So that is Dantzic? Really! I don't know anything about Dantzic," said Lefebvre, coolly, for he placed little faith in these charts furnished to the Emperor.

"You shall know Dantzic well, my dear Lefebvre. It is a port of prime importance on the Vistula. There all the commerce of the north centres. It has tremendous resources and unequalled facilities for the campaign I propose in the plains of Poland—for we are going to meet the Russians."

"So much the better," interrupted Lefebvre. "I shall enjoy cutting down more formidable antagonists than these Prussians. When do we meet the Russian troops?"

"Patience, patience, Lefebvre! Russia is a vast empire and a difficult one to handle. She can defend

herself by her size, her intense cold, her lack of communications, and even by famine. My soldiers would die of hunger and lack everything in those Polish snows ; they could never reach the heart of Moscow if I did not assure myself of sufficient supplies at my rear. That is why I need Dantzic !”

“If you need it you will have it.”

“I trust so ; but Dantzic is a place of strategic importance. The King of Prussia has made it the citadel of his kingdom. A garrison of forty thousand Prussians, with re-enforcements of four thousand Russians, are its defenders. Brave Marshal Kalkreuth is its governor. I tell you he is a brave soldier. He would set fire to the place sooner than admit a besieger. But, that is not all. Come, let us go over the plan.”

And Napoleon pointed out the situations to Lefebvre, who tried to understand General Chasseloup's work, but failed.

“You see,” said Napoleon at length, “as I said before, Dantzic is impregnable.”

Lefebvre shook his head and answered calmly, “Yes, quite so, sire.”

To himself he thought, “Why on earth does the Emperor tell all this to me ? What would he have me make of these papers ?”

Napoleon continued, tapping the marshal's arm, “Yes, Dantzic is impregnable. That is why I give to *you* the task of taking it.”

“To me ! It is I who—— Oh, I see, sire, I shall take it ! With my grenadiers.”

"With this, stupid," said Napoleon, pointing to General Chasseloup's plan.

Lefebvre was mystified. He looked first at the Emperor and then at the plan, from one to the other, trying to find some connection between the two. What could Napoleon mean? How could one take a city with a scrap of paper? He was ordered to take Dantzic—he would do it. But with his soldiery. They should see.

"Old horse," said Napoleon, "you shall take Dantzic, as I want you to, and then, when we return to France, you will have a tale to tell in the Senate Chamber!"

Lefebvre bowed, pleased with his Emperor's confidence. The latter had promised him minute instructions and the able assistance of Chasseloup, and the artillery general, Lareboisière.

"I shall write this good news to my wife," said Lefebvre, taking leave of the Emperor. "She will be so glad, and bless your Majesty again for your kindness!"

"Your wife? La Sans-Gêne?" said Napoleon in a disdainful voice. "Ah, you think a great deal of your wife, eh, Lefebvre?" he asked carelessly.

The marshal raised his head in surprise.

"Do I? Why do you ask that, sire? Ah, Catharine and I love like a pair of children. We are the same lovers to-day as when she was a laundress and I a sergeant, never dreaming that we should one day appear at your court, she as Madame la Maréchale and I as Commander of the Imperial Guard. Do I love

Catharine ? Oh, sire—my emperor, my wife, and my flag. I know only these and the law of arms ! I am untutored—scarce ever went to school. I am capable of but three things. To serve my emperor, to love my wife, and to defend the eagle you have confided to my care. I know these three, and but these three ; but I defy any in the Empire to avow himself better than I on these points.”

“Very well ; be calm, Lefebvre,” said Napoleon, hiding, with a smile, a thought he judged it best not to speak at the moment. “I would not keep you from loving your wife. When you have taken Dantzic, and we have conquered the whole line—see, old friend, I know the Maréchale Lefebvre, despite her occasional oaths, and her aspect of a misplaced soldier, at my court, is at bottom a good, true wife—it might make me smile in fancy ; but all the world will bow to her, when I place on the head of the former laundress a trophy they shall envy.”

“Ah, I will try to understand,” murmured Lefebvre, rubbing his forehead to facilitate the entrance of the idea. “Yes, I have a marshal’s baton, you would add other honors to it. Oh, sire, how can I ever repay you ? For you I should attempt the impossible !”

“Do so—take Dantzic.”

“I will,” answered Lefebvre ; and bowing he left the Emperor, his eyes bright, his cheeks flushed, his step buoyant and his spirit joyous.

“Brave heart,” murmured Napoleon, looking after him, “those soldiers of the old order were wondrous

men." And with a sigh he added, "That such heroes should become useless—war changes—I have altered it—and such men as Lefebvre cannot be found again—not such men as he—nor as myself, perhaps. Ah, he who lives will see. Now for Berlin!"

And, on the 27th of October, 1806, Berlin was the scene of a mighty spectacle. Like the legions of Rome the victorious army made its entry into the capital of the vanquished state, and La Violette was at its head.

CHAPTER IV.

MONSIEUR LE DUC.

WE must now carry the reader to the 26th of May following the events of our last chapter.

On that day, Marshal Lefebvre made his official entry into Dantzic.

He had invited his two colleagues, Marshal Lannes, and Marshal Mortier, to ride beside him, between double files of soldiers, to receive the surrendered sword of Marshal Kalkreuth, who was to evacuate the place with his vanquished garrison.

Lannes and Mortier refused on the ground that Lefebvre had the sole right to the honors, as he alone had sustained the labors and dangers of that memorable siege.

All the troops who had taken part in the capture of Dantzic formed the detachment of honor, and with

drums beating, and colors flying, marched behind their victorious chief.

The siege had lasted fifty-one days. The formidable position of the place, the equal number of assailants and besieged, the lack of artillery in the besieging camp, the cold, the snow, the rain, had all helped to prolong resistance.

The moral effect of the surrender of Dantzic was immense. The material result was equally important, for Napoleon found quantities of provisions, grain, and wine, which had been stored away. The wine especially was, in that cold climate, a cordial for the soldiers, an elixir of life and good spirits.

Two days after Lefebvre's entry into Dantzic, Napoleon came to visit the place. He assigned two regiments as town garrison, and gave a great dinner to all the generals, at which feast Lefebvre sat at his right hand.

Before the dinner, while all the generals and marshals—Lefebvre, Lannes, and Mortier—awaited the arrival of the Emperor, Duroc, the grand-marshal entered, bearing a sword whose hilt was encrusted with diamonds.

An officer accompanied him, bearing a red velvet cushion, on which lay a coronet of gold.

Duroc, holding the sword and the officer the cushion, took their places on either side of the chair reserved for Napoleon.

He entered presently, wearing his ordinary costume, and seated himself, smiling amusedly as his eyes caught sight of sword and crown.

The Emperor now rose and said solemnly to Duroc, "Pray ask our dear old friend, Marshal Lefebvre, to come hither."

Duroc bowed and addressed himself to Lefebvre, who had turned toward Napoleon.

He put out his hand mechanically, thinking the Emperor intended to greet him fraternally, before them all, in token of his victory.

But Napoleon said: "Grand-Marshal, pray ask Monsieur le Duc de Dantzig to kneel and receive the investiture."

Hearing that unaccustomed title, Lefebvre turned to see if the Emperor was addressing some one behind him—a Prussian functionary, or a Russian, for at that time there were in France neither dukes nor duchies.

Duroc whispered to him: "Kneel."

And he saw Duroc's assistant place a cushion for his knee, while Napoleon, taking the coronet, placed it on his head.

Entirely stupefied, Lefebvre remained on his knees, scarce understanding the great fortune which had come to him, while Napoleon, taking the sword, struck his shoulder thrice, saying, with the gravity of an officiating pontiff, "In the name of the Empire, by the Grace of God, and the desire of the nation, Lefebvre, I this day create thee Duke of Dantzig, to enjoy and profit by such advantages and privileges as shall be added to that dignity."

Then, in a softer voice, "Rise, Monsieur le Duc de Dantzig, and embrace your Emperor."

Immediately the drummers placed under the windows beat a march, and all the generals and marshals crowded round to congratulate Lefebvre.

Moved by the Emperor's embrace, and a little awkward about his coronet, which did not seem firm on his head, and seeking for a place to lay the ducal sword, which was to replace the sabre from the Pyramids, the Duc de Dantzig said to Duroc, who congratulated him : "How glad my good wife will be—Catharine a duchess ! how strange, Duroc !"

And, as he laughed heartily, he turned again to Duroc.

"Dear Marshal, how soon will the Emperor give the signal for us to be seated ?"

"Are you hungry, Lefebvre ?"

"No ! But the sooner the Emperor lets us dine, the sooner we'll have finished ; and I own to a wild desire to be the first who embraces and congratulates Madame, the Duchess of Dantzig."

CHAPTER V.

AT THE EMPRESS'S SALON.

THE Emperor was expected.

Victorious, master of Europe, having forced his friendship upon Russia, and his will upon Prussia, Napoleon returned once more as victor into Paris.

A state function had been arranged in honor of the

new Duchess of Dantzic. All the little world of great folk was busy with it.

People questioned, ironically, how the new duchess would take her rank.

Evil tongues were many ; and people spoke with ill-concealed sneers of the fact that the lady in question had been a laundress.

Many of the women who spoke thus of her were of equally humble extraction, and many of them were the subjects of scandalous tales.

The good Catharine, on the contrary, had a stainless reputation.

She was laughed at for her devotion to her husband.

As laundress, as cantinière, as general's wife, as lady of one of the first officers of the Empire, as Madame la Maréchale, even, she had had, this daughter of the people, but one love in her whole pure life ; that love was her husband, her Lefebvre.

He, too, had been faithful ; a virtue rare among the soldiers of the Empire.

He had never indulged in the accidental and allowed weaknesses of his master, his friend, his idol. Napoleon might deceive the Empress ; Lefebvre shook his head and murmured, " That is the only ground on which I do not follow the Emperor."

Once, laughing heartily, he said to his less scrupulous aides, " Look you, if I were to deceive Catharine, I could not conquer Prussians. I should be thinking constantly of her ; I should be a prey to remorse ; and one must have a whole heart and a clear conscience to

fight, as we do, one to twenty. And brave Lefebvre never blushed for his conjugal fidelity.

The Empress's reception was well under way when Catharine appeared.

Caroline and Elisa, Napoleon's two sisters, were quarrelling. Caroline was queen of Naples, and Elisa, the young lady from Saint-Cyr, was only a princess. From this low source sprung their war of words.

While his wife was going to Josephine's salon the brave marshal sat at breakfast with the Emperor.

The latter loved Lefebvre. He knew him to be honest and poor. He had made him a duke ; he decided also to make him rich.

At table he asked, suddenly, " Do you like chocolate, Monsieur le Duc ? "

" Why yes, sir ! I like chocolate, if you would have me do so. I like anything you like."

" Well, I will give you some—it is Dantzig chocolate. It is right you should taste the product of the town you have conquered."

Napoleon rose. He went to a little table, from which he took a long narrow package nearly the shape of a block of chocolate in a wrapper.

He handed it to the marshal, saying, " Duc de Dantzig, accept this chocolate. Such little gifts prove friendship."

Lefebvre took the package unceremoniously, put it into his pocket, and, taking his seat at table again, said, " Thank you, sire. I shall send the chocolate to a hospital. They say it is good for the patients."

"No," said the Emperor smiling, "I pray you keep it yourself, I pray you do so."

Lefebvre bowed, and thought. "What a strange idea, to give me chocolate, like a little girl."

The meal proceeded.

A pasty representing the city of Dantzic—the *chef-d'œuvre* of the imperial cook—was served.

The Emperor, before cutting it, said, "They could not have put that pasty into a shape to please me better. Yours be the signal of attack, Monsieur le Duc, there is your conquest. You must do the honors."

And he handed the knife to Lefebvre, who charged upon the mimic city.

The marshal returned home, enchanted with the kindness of his sovereign.

"What a pity Catharine was not there!" he thought, smiling. "His majesty was never in better humor; but that singular gift of Dantzic chocolate!"

Mechanically he opened the packet.

Under the satin paper were bank-notes for three hundred thousand francs!

It was the Emperor's gift to the new duke to sustain his rank.

The favor in which the marshal stood with the Emperor served, no doubt, to protect his wife somewhat from unkindness.

But Napoleon's sisters and the ladies who curried favor with them, lost no opportunity to remind her of her humble birth.

Circumstances frequently favored them, as in the case of the Empress's receptions.

Catharine Lefebvre, in grand costume, her head-dress surmounted by white ostrich plumes, trailing her court-gown, and somewhat embarrassed by her long cloak of sky-blue velvet, embroidered with the ducal coronet,—advanced, blushing, and almost timid, across the threshold.

For once, La Sans-Gêne was abashed.

She had repeated with Despréaux, in the morning, the ceremonial of her presentation in the character of a duchess, taking rank beside the queens around the Empress.

The pompous little usher, who had often introduced her at the Tuileries, saw her coming, and spoke in his sweetest tones, as he announced, "Madame La Maréchale Lefebvre."

Catharine murmured, "The stupid! He doesn't know his part."

The Empress, meantime, descending from her throne, went to meet her.

Josephine was ever gracious, and she spoke thus to the wife of the great conqueror :

"How is Madame the Duchess of Dantzic?"

"As strong as the Pont-neuf," answered Catharine unceremoniously. "And your Majesty?"

And turning to the usher she said imperturbably, with an air of satisfaction, "Learn your part, lad."

She took her place in the circle of ladies amid suppressed giggles and laughing eyes.

Even when the Empress tried to put her at ease by addressing her graciously, Catharine thought she was being laughed at.

She bit her lips, to keep from saying her mind to the women around her.

"What are they better than I, those creatures," she thought. "Ah, if the Emperor were only here, he would let me tell them what I think."

A man approached her.

"Madame la Duchesse does not recognize me," he said, bowing very low.

"Not exactly—I seem to have seen you somewhere."

"Exactly—I knew you ere you had attained the high rank in which I have the honor to salute you."

"You mean when I was a laundress? Oh, do not hesitate to say that; I never blush for my former rank; nor does Lefebvre. I have kept in a chest my old costume, and he also his uniform as Sergeant of the Guards."

"Ah, well, lady," said he in a soft voice (his aspect was half that of a priest, half of a bandit), "at that far-off period, I had the pleasure of being in your company at a public ball. I was a client of yours—almost a friend. A magician predicted that you should one day be a duchess."

"Ah, I remember him well. Lefebvre and I often speak of those times. What did the sorcerer tell you? Anything?"

"I also had a horoscope cast for me; and, like yours, it is realized."

“ Really ! What did it foretell ? ”

“ That I should be minister of police, and I am ! ”
This was said with a slow smile.

“ Ah, you are M. Fouché ! ” said Catharine with a shudder ; she was a little uneasy at the presence of this man, in whom, with a woman’s intuition she divined a traitor.

“ At your service, Madame la Duchesse ! ” said the cat-like courtier with a bow ; and he added, “ You seem to have rivals, nay, actual enemies here, Madame la Duchesse ; let me guard you from certain dangers. Do not give these women the pleasure of profiting by your ignorance, by certain freedoms of speech, whose danger you do not understand.”

“ You are very kind, M. Fouché ; I accept your offer,” said Catharine. “ You knew me long ago, and know that I have no fine manners. But I know there are things one should not say in society. Only I do not heed my tongue, or watch myself carefully enough. You understand ? ”

“ Yes. Will Madame la Duchesse permit me to warn her at the dangerous places ? ”

“ Gladly, M. Fouché. I am infinitely obliged to you. I am ignorant of the ways of palaces, I, who left my flat-iron for canteen service in the army ! ”

“ Will Madame la Duchesse watch me, and when I tap, thus, with my two fingers, on my snuff-box, stop—that is the danger-signal.”

“ I shall not lose sight of you or your snuff-box,” was the rejoinder.

" My snuff-box principally."

And this arrangement completed, the two followed the Empress into the next room, where a collation had been prepared.

CHAPTER VI.

CATHARINE'S REVENGE.

THE unkind remarks and caustic criticisms followed Catharine to the supper-room,

The Queen of Naples and her sister Elisa were grouped with several friends, who turned a cold shoulder on the new duchess.

Caroline showed, behind her fan, a note written to Leroy, the court-costumer, by the Maréchale Lefebvre ; she had paid well to get it ; and it read : " Will M. Leroy not forget to bring me to-morrow my gown of catin " (*sic.*)

She told another story of how Catharine had one day missed a large diamond. She had suspected a workman who had been alone in the room where the jewel was kept. The servants, fearing to be suspected, had summoned an agent of the police.

The man was regularly questioned. He was searched, and nothing was found on him.

" My children, you don't know anything," said the maréchale, who had been present. " If you had seen,

as I have, soldiers searched, you would know that there are other places to hide things than in one's pockets and one's shoes. Let me try it." And with a nonchalance which would have been funny save for the gravity of the offence, she explored the clothing of the man, and discovered the jewel.

The affair made quite a stir, and Elisa asked Catharine to tell the Empress the story of the search; and Catharine would have fallen into her trap, had not Fouché, just behind her, tapped nervously on his snuff-box.

"Aha!" she thought, "his danger-signal—I should have said something out of place, and Fouché has saved me. I think him a queer specimen, but he may be able to advise me."

Accordingly, she resolved it in her quick brain; and the idea struck her to give a lesson to these false ladies, who were rich, elegant, be-gemmed only by the grace of fortune and the bounty of Napoleon.

She advanced to the centre of the mocking circle, and, looking at Caroline and Elisa, said with stinging sarcasm: "Your Majesty, and you, Madame la Princesse, you make much of the fact that a poor woman like myself should be able to discover a thief—a poor thief—one who steals a trifle—a servant—a hireling, who was neither marshal, nor king, and did not belong to the Emperor's family; they who take trifles are arrested, ladies, the others are respected, honored! Forsooth, I was wrong and I should have left the diamond with the poor unfortunate thief, so long as crowned

thieves may pillage the Empire, and divide the spoils of our poor country, our France."

Catharine's words produced a startling effect on the brilliant train of the Queen of Naples.

Fouché had come near and tapped frequently—but Catharine paid no heed.

She would not hear him, and looking straight at these women, she continued :

"Yes, the Emperor is too good—too weak. He, who does not know the use of money ; who, sober, economical, could live on a captain's pay—he lets all whom his favor has raised from the most lowly position, pillage, ravage, openly steal and consume the people's substance.

"They are not servants who steal jewels left lying in rooms, they are marshals, they are sovereigns whom the Emperor has created, and who should be exposed and searched through."

Her voice shook with anger. Strong in the knowledge of Lefebvre's incontestable probity, Catharine Sans-Gêne searched the faces of these insolent women, whose husbands stole from the Empire and were traitors to the Emperor.

Caroline of Naples was always audacious ; and the pride of being a queen gave her added audacity.

"Madame la Duchesse would perhaps remind us of the epoch of republican virtue," she said with a sneer. "Oh, the fair times when all were equal, and when one was suspected if one happened to wash one's hands !"

"Do not dare to insult the soldiers of the Republic," cried Catharine, in a trembling voice. "They were all heroes! Lefebvre was one of them. They did not fight, like your husbands, and your lovers, ladies, to gain promotion, privileges, rewards, to despoil the provinces, and pillage the public treasury.

"The soldiers of the Republic fought to free a down-trodden people, to deliver men from servitude, to glorify France, and defend her liberty. Their successors have fought bravely; but the emoluments of glory, rather than glory herself, entreated them. What they seek, above all else, is the booty which follows a cavalry charge, which is ever heroically conducted by your King Murat. The Emperor does not see that the day when fortune ceases to serve him, the day when there is no more booty, but when he needs defenders, with his wounded eagle, for the sod of my crushed Alsace, or the fair land of Champagne, that then these fair victors will ask to rest! Not one would fight for honor and country! They will demand peace, they will say France is weary of war, and wants to rest. Ah! Our Emperor, God bless him, will miss those soldiers of the Republic! When he seeks for men who are friends to danger, soldiers who fear not, he will find, alas! only the husbands of queens, whose desire will be to conserve their newly-acquired thrones!"

Every word of Catharine's struck home to the princesses.

Elisa rose hastily, saying to Caroline: "Let us go,

sister, we cannot answer fitly a laundress, whom our brother's weakness has made a duchess ! ”

Both left the room with an offended air, after a curt salutation to the Empress, who understood nothing of the reasons for anger of her haughty sisters-in-law.

Fouché approached Catharine.

“ You spoke rather strongly, Madame la Duchesse,” said he, with his slow smile. “ I warned you, on my snuff-box—but you could not be stopped——”

“ Rest easy, M. Fouché,” said Catharine, calmly, “ I shall tell it all to the Emperor, and when he sees how matters stand, he will not blame me.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIVORCE.

JOSEPHINE had long feared the blow which was destined to strike her so heavily.

She held a certificate of her religious marriage, given her by Cardinal Fesch ; and she counted on the true and steadfast affection of Napoleon to maintain her place at his side.

Summoned by the arch-chancellor, Cambaceres, she presented herself trembling, her tears ready to fall from those lovely soft eyes.

The interview was short and stormy.

It was after dinner, on November 30, 1809. Napo-

leon, when the coffee was served, took his cup from the page, and signed him to leave the room.

For the last time, he and his wife were alone.

Napoleon told his resolution in few words. He tried not to seem moved. He explained briefly that the interests of the state required that he should have an heir, and therefore he proposed to have his first marriage annulled, and to contract a second.

Josephine stammered out a few words,—how she had loved her Bonaparte, and how he had returned her love ; and when she tried to re-awaken his tender feelings, by recalling their hours of happiness, Napoleon interrupted her quickly, desirous of resisting just that soft emotion which would unman him. He entrenched himself behind a cold exterior.

“Do not try to soften me—do not think to change my resolution. I shall always love you, Josephine ; but policy demands that I part from you. Policy has no heart ; only a head.”

Josephine gave a cry, and fell senseless to the floor.

The usher of the chamber, standing outside the door, thinking she was ill, wanted to enter ; but he did not wish to interfere between the two, nor be a witness of the cruel scene.

The Emperor himself opened the door, and calling to his chamberlain, M. de Bausset, said, “Come in, and shut the door.”

M. de Bausset followed his sovereign. He saw Josephine lying on the floor, uttering heart-rending cries.

"Oh, how shall I survive this? If I could only die!" she moaned between her tears.

"Are you strong enough to lift the Empress, and carry her, by the inside stairway, to her own room?" asked Napoleon. "Wait, I will help you——"

And between them, they lifted Josephine, who had fainted again.

M. de Bausset took the Empress in his arms, her head against his shoulder, and started slowly.

The Emperor, torch in his hand, lighted the half-funeral way.

He opened the door, and said to Bausset, "Now, down the stairs——"

"Sire, the stairway is too steep—I shall fall."

So Napoleon decided to ask the aid of the usher, too.

He gave the latter the light, and taking Josephine's feet, he told the chamberlain to take her by the arms; and thus they descended—slowly—painfully.

Lifeless, and without giving even a sigh, Josephine seemed like a corpse being carried to a tomb.

Suddenly the chamberlain heard her soft voice saying, "Why do you hurry thus?"

So, assured that his wife was recovering, Napoleon left her. He was even more troubled than she.

He sacrificed love and happiness to policy. He was cruelly punished for all later.

It seemed, people said, afterward, like a terrible and prophetic vision of his destiny, that sinister descent of the woman who had been the companion of his glory, his good angel.

The divorce papers were signed on the evening of December 15th, at the Tuileries, where a solemn assembly was seated.

Napoleon, taking Josephine's hand, read, while real tears stood in his eyes, a discourse prepared by Cambacérès, in which he announced the resolution taken by himself and his dear wife. He gave, as sole reason for the divorce, the hope of an heir by a second marriage.

"I am but forty years old," he said ; "and may still hope to rear children with my spirit and thought, if it please Providence to give them to me. God knows what this resolution has cost me, how it has rent my heart ; but there is no sacrifice for which I should not have courage, if I saw it to be for the good of France.

"I must add that, far from having any cause of complaint, I have ever had only sincere love and tenderness from my sweet wife. She has adored fifteen years of my life ; and the memory of these is indelibly engraven on my heart. She was crowned by my hand, and I desire that she should conserve the rank and title of Empress ; and that, above all, she should never doubt that in me she will ever find her best and most devoted friend."

Josephine was to read a reply to this declaration, but she could not. Tears choked her utterance. She passed the paper to Regnauld de Saint-Jean-d'Angély, who read it for her.

She said she accepted with resignation the decree of divorce, since she could not give the Emperor an heir.

"But," said the text, "the dissolution of my mar-

riage can, in no wise, change the emotions of my heart ; in me will the Emperor ever find his most devoted friend. I know how much this act, commended by policy and great issues, has bruised his heart ; but both of us glory in the sacrifice we make for the good of our country."

To these words, Josephine added but one sentence, touching in its very simplicity.

"I am glad to give to the Emperor this, the greatest proof of attachment and devotion which the world has ever seen."

This attitude of Josephine's in the dark days of her divorce excused her for many shortcomings ; and posterity will ever be lenient with her, the victim of Napoleon's policy and his dynastic ambitions.

On December 16th the Consular-Senate declared the union dissolved. It was a Saturday.

At eight o'clock in the evening, a coach came to the Tuileries, to take Josephine to Malmaison.

It was a dreadful night. The sky seemed covered with a pall for the occasion, like a funeral.

The Rueil road, leafless, dark and sombre, added to the ex-Empress's sadness.

How often she had gone over it with joy, in the flush of power, amid the glitter of sovereignty !

Her son, Prince Eugène, accompanied her.

The Emperor had left the Tuileries, and gone for the night to Trianon.

Two days later the Emperor paid a visit to Malmaison.

"I find you weaker than you ought to be," said Napoleon gently. "You have shown high courage; you must go on being courageous. You must not succumb to sorrow. Give heed to your health, which is very precious to me. Sleep well, and remember that I want to think of you as being calm and peaceful."

He kissed her tenderly, and went to Trianon.

Josephine buried at Malmaison, the preparations for the Emperor's second marriage were pushed on vigorously.

Talleyrand and Fouché, the two inseparable traitors, were joined by M. de Metternich, of whom Cambacérès said, "He is quite ready to be a statesman, he is such a good liar." These three hurried to give to the sad and lonely Tuileries a young Empress.

M. de Metternich made known to the Emperor, through the Duc de Bassano, that he had addressed the Austrian court and anticipated no refusal.

In reality the Austrian Emperor feared the dismembering of his empire. In giving his daughter to Napoleon, he would keep war from his land, at least for a time, and in that respite lay safety.

In February, 1810, Napoleon broke with the Czar, and sent an autograph letter to Francis II. of Austria.

It was an official request. Berthier, Prince of Neufchâtel, was charged to solicit the hand of the Princess Marie-Louise from the court of Vienna.

Napoleon was in the prime of life and at the pinnacle of his glory when, the divorce accomplished, he dreamed of wedding Marie-Louise.

The idea of this marriage, the thought of the young girl who was to become his wife occupied him much ; hence his frequent glances into mirrors, and his change of manners.

The first change wrought by the near approach of his marriage, was the new care given to his toilet. With a view to pleasing Marie-Louise, he sent for the tailor who made Murat's clothes, and ordered a foppish costume, like that worn by the king of Naples. But it did not suit him, and he would not wear it.

In vain did Léger, the tailor, offer to change it, to touch it up—he could not wear this too magnificent costume, and sent it as a gift to his brother-in-law, who was delighted with its splendor.

But he laid aside his spurred boots, and ordered a pair of dainty shoes from a ladies' shoemaker ; and he sent for Despréaux and ordered him to teach him to waltz.

He wanted to open the ball with Marie-Louise, at the marriage feast, and, with a German princess, a waltz was necessary.

He tramped round the Tuileries with as feverish an anxiety as he had ever shown on the eve of battle.

On one such occasion he met Lefebvre.

"Come, Monsieur le Duc de Dantzig," he said gayly, "I want to talk to you."

Lefebvre growled between his teeth, "Hum ! he wants to pour into my ears once more the praises of his Austrian. She is perfect—an eighth wonder—there never was so fair a princess. Why doesn't he take

Murat or Savary aside for such confidences? They are of no interest to me."

Marshal Lefebvre missed Josephine. He hated to see the Emperor placing on the throne of France a Princess of Austria whose alliances had always boded ill to the land which received them.

Besides, the idea of divorce did not suit him. It seemed like desertion. Having begun life's battle together, two people should not part in the midst of the fray.

Meantime, the Emperor had taken him into the great salon of the Tuileries where workmen were busy covering the walls with cloth of gold and arranging rich hangings.

"Ha! Marshal, is not this beautiful?" asked Napoleon, delightedly.

"Yes, it is magnificent," said Lefebvre. "It must be very expensive."

"There is nothing too fine nor too costly," said the Emperor, "for her who is to be Empress."

In a corner stood a beautiful harp of gilded wood, with a chain of dancing cupids painted on it.

"The Arch-duchess is a fine musician," said the Emperor, touching the strings of the instrument lightly with his fingers, and producing a plaintive sound.

He showed Lefebvre the jewels he had secured—jewels such as no queen had ever worn. His own portrait was set for her in a circle of diamonds. There were necklaces of emeralds, of turquoises, and dia-

monds. Such were the wedding gifts prepared by the Emperor, to which must be added a necklace of diamonds, the gift of the Royal Treasury, valued at three million three hundred thousand francs.

The Empress was to have thirty thousand francs a month for personal expenses—a thousand francs a day !

“ Ah, the Empress should be happy,” said he to Lefebvre at parting.

“ Yes, sire ; the more as the Arch-duchess is said to live very plainly at her father's court. She has but a few simple jewels. Why, your victories have reduced Emperor Francis very seriously. But, in her place, all these diamonds, laces, and jewels of great value would seem a trifle beside the glory of being the spouse of the Emperor Napoleon.”

“ Flatterer,” said the Emperor gayly.

“ I speak just as I think, sire. You know I am like my wife, a little ‘ sans-gêne. ’ ”

“ As to your wife—I want to talk with you. Dine with me. We can talk at table.”

And he took Lefebvre to the dining-room, a little surprised, and asking himself somewhat uneasily : “ What can he want to say about my wife ? Has she fallen out with the Emperor's sisters again ? ”

CHAPTER VIII.

LEFEBVRE WITHSTANDS NAPOLEON.

THE Emperor's dinner was prepared, and the table set in a little dining-room which the great man preferred to the large halls.

The dinner at which Lefebvre found himself so unexpectedly was served simply, but rather more elaborately than usual.

Napoleon was trying to accustom himself to remaining long at table.

It was another sacrifice for the sake of his future bride.

"The Germans have great appetites and are used to sitting long at meals, so I must get used to it, too," he said.

Lefebvre was a hearty eater, and was glad of this new departure of the Emperor's.

But his uneasiness marred his appetite. "Why," he thought, "has the Emperor asked me here to talk about my wife?"

When the dinner was over and coffee served, Napoleon asked him, "What, Marshal, do you say, among yourselves, as to my rupture with Josephine? You surely speak of it; and I want to know what is thought of the divorce, and of my new marriage."

"Sire, we know naught but what you have told us ; we bow before your will ; we are not in the habit of discussing your orders. Both the divorce and the marriage mean to us a new move which you have found it necessary to make. We have no right to object."

"Ah ! but how do you feel about it ? That is what I want to know !"

"Hum ! It is not interesting nor important," said Lefebvre, hesitating. "Sire, to tell you the truth, we miss the Empress. She was good and amiable, with a gracious word for any who approached her ; besides, we were used to her and she to us. She rose as we did. We had risen together with you, sire, to our high stations. She never dreamed of reproaching us with our humble birth or our ignorance of polite ways. Oh, I know how we are talked about, especially my dear, good wife and I, in the circle of the Queen of Naples and the Grand Duchess Elisa."

"Do not exaggerate the raillery of my sisters. I have already told them that they must not turn to derision the brave men who helped me to gain my victories and to establish the throne they consider too much like a family inheritance."

"The Empress Josephine, sire, never tolerated those unkind jokes and looks which hurt. She always treated us well. We fear that a new sovereign, a princess, brought up at the Austrian court, among proud nobles, having all the prejudices of her caste, will treat us differently. We fear we will be of too humble extraction for so aristocratic a lady. Sire, we are somewhat

afraid of your Emperor's daughter. This, sire, is what we say—your marshals, your generals, your companions-in-arms who, as you know, fear not even Jove's thunder."

"Be at ease, my brave friend. Marie-Louise is very good. Your new Empress cannot but honor heroes like you, Lefebvre, like Ney, Oudinot, Soult, Mortier, Bessières and Suchet.

"Your scars are fair blazonries, and your nobility has for its crest, not fantastic griffins, but captured cities, vanquished citadels, standards, and even thrones, which you have won. That modern heraldry Marie-Louise will learn and respect."

"It is not only we," murmured Lefebvre, "but our wives."

"Eh ! yes," said Napoleon impatiently, "your sacred wives have not won battles ; they——"

"Sire, they are part of our life—they spurred our courage, inflamed our energies ; they love and admire us, and they are true wives who merit the reward your Majesty and victory bring them," said Lefebvre warmly.

"Yes, yes, I know ; but some of these very excellent wives to whose virtues I pay homage, make nevertheless peculiar court ladies, strange duchesses. Why, in heaven's name did you so foolishly marry when you were sergeant ?"

"Sir, if it was a mistake, I, for one, have never regretted it."

"You are a true and loyal heart, Lefebvre ; I believe your words as I do your deeds ; but you must own that

now, when you are a marshal of the Empire, a great officer of my court, the Duke of Dantzig, your wife, your dear, good wife, is a little out of place. She creates laughter by her provincialisms—her speech is still that of a washer-woman."

"The Duchess of Dantzig, or rather Madame Lefebvre, sire, loves me ; I love her, and nothing in her manners can make me forget the many happy years we have spent, when, between battles, we could be together."

"It is too bad that you married in the days of the Revolution, Lefebvre."

"Sire, it is a fact, nevertheless, and unalterable."

"You think so ?" said Napoleon, looking fixedly at him.

The marshal shuddered, frightened all at once, and fearing to read the Emperor's thought. He stammered :

"Catharine and I are united for life."

"But," said the Emperor quickly, "I, too, was married to Josephine, and yet——"

"Sire, you were different."

"Possibly. Really, my dear Lefebvre, have you never considered divorce ?"

"Never, sire !" cried the marshal. "I consider a divorce as a——"

He stopped, lest his words should be construed as a criticism of the Emperor's conduct.

"Listen," said Napoleon, noticing his embarrassment. "Suppose you and your wife separately com-

mon consent. Your wife shall have a considerable dowry ; she shall be treated with all regard ; all honor shall be given her in her retreat ; she shall still be called duchess—she will be duchess-dowager—you understand ? ”

Lefebvre had risen, and stood, pale as death, leaning against the chimney. Biting his lips, he continued to listen to the Emperor's proposition.

The latter went on talking, and walked up and down, his hands crossed behind him, as if dictating orders for a battle.

“ Once the divorce is pronounced, I will find you a wife, a woman of the old court, with a title, a name, a lineage. She need not be rich. I will supply you wealth for both. You new nobility must mingle with the old. You who are modern paladins must ally yourselves with the daughters of the heroes of the Crusades.

” Thus shall we establish, by the fusion of the past and present of France, the society of the future, the new order of a regenerated world.

“ Then there will be no more antagonism between the two aristocracies. Your children will take rank with those of the oldest families of Europe, and within two generations there will exist no traces, no memories, perhaps, of this division between hostile parties. There will be but one France, but one nobility, but one people ! Oh, divorce is imperative, Lefebvre ! I will try to find you a fitting wife ! ”

“ Sire, you may send me to the ends of the earth, to the burning deserts of Africa, to the heart of the frozen

steppes of Siberia; you may dispose of me as you will—say, should you order me to be shot, I would obey. You may also take my rank, which I hold by virtue of my sword, and your kindness ; but you cannot change my love for Catharine, you cannot part me from her, who was my devoted companion in dark days and who, until death part us, is my *wife* ! No, sire, your power does not go that far, and, though I incur your displeasure, I shall not divorce my wife; and Madame Lefebvre, who is *maréchale* and duchess by your desire, shall remain Madame Lefebvre, through mine ! ”

Thus, for the first time, did the Duke of Dantzic brave his Emperor, and resist his will.

Napoleon watched him narrowly.

“ You are a brave man, a model husband, Monsieur le Duc de Dantzic,” he said, coldly ; “ I do not share your ideas, but I respect your scruples. Why, man, I am no tyrant. We will not speak again of a divorce. Cleave to your wife—only warn her to guard her tongue, and not to introduce into my court, before the Empress, brought up at the imperial palace in Vienna, the language of her class. Go ! Monsieur le Duc, I must see the Minister of Police. You may return to your housekeeper ! ”

Lefebvre bowed and withdrew, quite stunned by the audacious proposition of the Emperor.

As he passed out Napoleon looked after him, shrugged his shoulders, and summed up his opinion of Lefebvre’s resistance to his matrimonial projects, in one word : “ Imbecile ! ”

CHAPTER IX.

THE FLAMING HEART.

LEFEBVRE was very uneasy as to the result of his resistance. He did not know how the Emperor would take it.

He returned home to find Catharine trying on a court-robe, in view of the ceremonies of the approaching imperial marriage.

She dropped everything on seeing her husband, and ran to greet him joyously; but noticing his disturbed expression she asked, anxiously: "What is it? Has anything happened to the Emperor?"

"No, his Majesty is well—very well."

"Ah, you lift a weight from my heart!"

The possibility of Napoleon's assassination haunted people, and they could imagine no greater catastrophe.

"What is it?" Catharine repeated. "You are restless, you are unable to remain quiet. Is it a grave matter?"

"Very grave."

"Have you had a dispute with his Majesty?"

"Yes, we had it out. The Emperor wanted me to do something—I refused. I took the offensive—and——"

"And what?"

"I fought him. It is dangerous to defy the Emperor, he can revenge himself."

"True; but about whom, about what, did you quarrel?"

"About you."

"About me! Impossible!"

"It is true. Guess what he wanted me to do with you?"

"I do not know; perhaps to send me to the castle he told us to buy—for which he sent the money—at Dantzic?"

"Yes, that is it—in the country—far away. He wants you to live there."

"Why did you not accept? I should like to live a little in the country. We can have horses and dogs and a cow. Ah, it would be pleasant; and besides, dear, I am growing tired of these jays at court who laugh at us. I do not enjoy the imperial receptions. So, if the Emperor wants us to go out of town, to the country he has given us, let us go at once—there may be peace for a long while—for always, perhaps. Why, my husband, did you not respond to his Majesty's wish? Why did you not say, 'Sire, we will go'?"

"Because, my sweet Catharine, when the Emperor spoke of your leaving court and going to the distant castle, he spoke only of you!"

"And you?"

"I should have to remain with the Emperor."

"That is another question. Separate us in time of peace! For what? It is enough that, when you are

at war, I cannot be near you as an aide. But now, when all Europe is at peace. What ails the Emperor ? ”

“ The Emperor wishes, not only to part us, my sweet wife, but can you fancy what he wants me to do ? ”

“ No ! To take charge of an army ? or perhaps to act as governor of a great state,—Naples ? Holland ? ”

“ Not that ! He wants me to marry ! ”

Catharine gave a cry.

“ Marry ! You ! Ah ! And I——”

“ Divorce.”

“ Divorce ! Has he dared to propose that ? Has he dared to speak of such a thing ? How abominable in the Emperor ! What did you say, Lefebvre ? ”

The marshal's answer was to open wide his arms, into which Catharine threw herself. They embraced each other passionately.

Nothing should part them. In that silent and loving embrace they vowed that so traitorous a thought should never come to them. Each sustained the other beneath the vague fear of danger from the Emperor.

At length Catharine disengaged herself and asked : “ What did you say to the Emperor ? ”

Lefebvre led his wife to a couch and, seated beside her, looked tenderly into her eyes, took her hand in his, and answered :

“ I told the Emperor that I loved thee, Catharine, and loved but thee. I told him, dear, that we had been happy together ; that we had spent our youth together ; and that we had but one dream, to lead our exist-

ence to its end, side by side, until such time as a Russian bullet or a Spanish round-shot should send me to join Hoche, Lannes, and the rest of my companions in the wars gone by."

"You spoke well. Does the Emperor think, because he is divorced, all the world should follow his example? He had an object—a design. *Why* did he want your divorce?"

"I tell you he wanted me to marry!"

"Whom? I want to know. Oh, I am jealous. Tell me whom he proposed."

"He named no one."

"Fine!"

"He spoke generally. He wants us to imitate him—to use him as a model. He is going to marry an arch-duchess. He wants each of us to marry a noblewoman."

"Such an idea! See, Lefebvre, I do not speak for you, I know your sentiments; but the other marshals—what will they do with these fine ladies, proud of their ancestors? Is not Augereau the son of a merchant?"

"Ney and Massena are both children of the people like ourselves. It is folly to try to mate them with women who would blush for them, who would laugh at them, and deceive them with men of the old nobility. Lefebvre, I begin to fear our Emperor is mad. Mad on the subject of marriage with an emperor's daughter, a haughty Austrian, to whom he can never be more than a fortunate soldier, such as thou art!"

"The Emperor has his reasons."

"So have we. You refused definitely ? "

"Can you doubt it ? " said Lefebvre tenderly, taking her in his arms again.

Blushing with pleasure, Catharine nestled there.

"So you are not afraid ? Art sure I will never consent to a divorce—to wed another ? " Lefebvre asked, smiling.

"Are you not mine ? Did you not swear to be mine always ? "

"Yes, I swore it before a magistrate. It is long since ; but I have not forgotten, my sweet, the oath I took when you became my wife."

"Nor I ; and, had you forgotten, you have something to remind you of your promise ! "

"What ? "

"This," said Catharine, taking her husband's wrist ; and, turning back the cuff of his uniform, she pushed back his shirt-sleeve, and displayed, on his bare arm, a heart aflame with this legend, "To Catharine, for life," tattooed in blue marks on the marshal's skin.

It was the mark he had had placed there when he was married. "His wedding-gift," he had called it.

"There it is still, the oath," said Catharine, triumphantly. "Could you wed an arch-duchess with such an arm ? What would she say, if she saw it ? She would ask who that Catharine was to whom you had sworn fidelity—she would create a scene. Ah, no, my dear old François, you could not take back your promise ! "

"True—and the other arm would please her no

better," said Lefebvre, laughing. And he turned back the other cuff, and displayed the tattooing of the 10th of August, with the inscription, "Death to the tyrant."

"See, we belong to each other for life," said Catharine, laying her head on Lefebvre's breast, and resting there happily.

"Yes, for life," whispered the marshal.

"I would the Emperor could surprise us now," said Catharine, softly.

And husband and wife, more than ever united in mutual caresses, celebrated the victory Lefebvre had gained over Napoleon.

CHAPTER X.

THE DUCHESS'S NEW HAT.

"HERE is Madame la Duchesse's new hat," said Lise, the maid, opening the door of the room where Catharine Lefebvre was moving about before a mirror, trying on a new hunting costume which the tailor had just brought.

A hunting-party at Compiègne had been arranged by the Emperor, for the morrow, and the Duchess of Dantzic had ordered for that occasion a long skirt, a coat with metal buttons, and a cocked hat.

She had been dissatisfied with the suit, which she found too tight.

"I can't get into it. It will surely burst—and then I shall surely be laughed at," she sighed. "What do I care, anyway," she continued, gayly. "I know them all, those court-moths. If I could only get hold of Queen Caroline, for instance! I should remind her of her early days. We have sworn respect and obedience to his Majesty—but not to her. Madame Murat did not gain the battle of Austerlitz! Lise, let me see the hat!"

She took it from the maid, and set it on her head, rather far back, and looked at herself.

"It seems to me pretty bad."

"I do not find it so, Madame la Duchesse," ventured the maid.

"You don't know anything, Lise, nor I, for that matter."

"Does Madame la Duchesse think it too big?"

"No, too small. That man knows but the measure of our head evidently."

"Does Madame la Duchesse wish me to bring him here? He is in the ante-chamber."

"The hatter himself?"

"No, his clerk."

"Let him come in."

And Catharine turned again to the mirror.

The door opened. Catharine did not leave the glass. She continued to push the hat about on her head impatiently.

She did not stop to receive the hatter's clerk.

Suddenly she shrieked.

She saw in her glass the face of the clerk Lise had brought in.

She turned, and, pointing to the door, said to the astonished maid,

“Go, and quickly.”

“What ails madame to-day,” thought Lise, “that the coming of that boy should bother her?”

And, closing the door behind her, Lise laughed.

“Ah, she probably knew him when she was a laundress—an old acquaintance of that fair time. Ah, ah, it were droll, indeed, if this clerk who comes to bring madame’s hat from Paris, should be more than an acquaintance!”

While Lise was conjecturing outside, her mistress had gone to the clerk, and, taking his hands in hers, said anxiously, “How do you happen to be at Compiègne?”

“I happened to be at your hatter’s in Paris. I heard you were to get a hat! I followed the boy who was sent with it. With the aid of a bribe, I succeeded in getting him to wait, while I delivered it. I came in his place; and I have carried out my part. Your men were well deceived. Your steward overtook me, and offered to pay your bill; and the valet, and chamberlain both spoke to me. Oh, I am quite safe.”

“You are not wise. Do you not know you have enemies at court?”

“Only one—the Emperor!”

“That is enough. Ah, if they could know that the Count de Neipperg is here!”

“They shall not know it,” said Neipperg, decidedly,

for it was he, who had braved Napoleon's jealous hatred, and come to see his queen.

"But there are spies," said Catharine; "remember that you are watched. The Emperor will surely know. Even the Empress's ladies are questioned. He is jealous, and, if you are found, you will be lost."

"I shall not stay long. In two days I shall be again on the road to Vienna."

"Why did you come?"

"I had to see the Empress."

"You cannot. You have no right to trouble her peace, nor to arouse suspicion."

"But I must see Marie-Louise. I must give her something she once gave me."

"A love-token?"

"Yes—this ring. She gave it me with a rose when I was ordered back to Austria, whence I had escorted her as Napoleon's bride."

He kissed the ring.

"I must return this jewel," he murmured, "though it is more precious to me than all the treasures of earth; more precious than life. But I must."

"Is it to return that that you have come from Austria, that you would brave the Emperor's anger, and justify his jealousy?"

"How could I do otherwise? Napoleon has found out, probably by some slip of one of her ladies, that the Empress has not the ring. Marie-Louise pretended to have lost it.

"Napoleon insisted that she look for, and find it.

An entreaty came to me at Vienna. I started. To-night Marie-Louise shall have her ring, and her husband's suspicions will vanish."

"But if you should be seen, what explanation will you give?"

"None. I trust to escape."

"Who will help you to enter the palace?"

Neipperg hesitated and looked at Catharine.

"I have but one friend; one true and faithful friend, in France; you, my dear Duchess. I had hoped you would help me—save me once more, perhaps!"

Catharine said, quickly: "No, do not count on me."

"Catharine Lefebvre, do you remember the 10th of August? Why did you rescue me, protect me, save me from the guards who were ready to shoot me? Why, since you will let me perish now?"

"This is not the 10th of August, my dear Count," said Catharine, with dignity. "I am la Maréchale Lefebvre, Duchess of Dantzic, and I owe all to the Emperor. My husband is his faithful subject, his companion in fields of glory, a marshal of his armies, a duke of his empire; with him he has covered the battle-fields of Europe; we dare not, the marshal and I, succor an enemy of the Emperor's, though he be a friend of ours, though we owe him an old debt. Remember the 10th of August, but do not forget Jemmapes. Reflect, Monsieur de Neipperg, that which you ask is impossible. La Maréchale Lefebvre dare not know your errand in France."

"So you desert me?"

"I advise you to go back to Vienna without seeing the Empress."

"And this ring?"

"I will return it myself, discreetly. Trust it to me—I promise you."

And Catharine extended her hand to Neipperg, who imprinted on it a fervent kiss.

"Thank you," he murmured, "and tell the Empress, too, that though I go away, I shall be ready at the first call, at the first sign. To-day, she is at the summit of power—to-morrow—who knows?"

"I shall attend to your commission, Count, but I hope and believe that the Empress will never need to call upon you thus."

"Who knows? Madame, your Emperor stands upon quicksand——"

"Which will not hurt him. The Goddess of Victory watches over him. His throne is surrounded by prostrate kings——"

"Prostrate kings may rise again, and then revenge themselves for their long servitude; I know whereof I speak. Let your Emperor beware. A storm is gathering whose thunders will soon resound——"

"If the storm threatens, it cannot come from Vienna. Your Emperor is father-in-law to ours."

"My sovereign has never held as serious his alliance with Napoleon. He sacrificed his daughter to save some of his provinces. While Napoleon is victorious he will be treated as a son by Francis II.; when he rolls in the dust his father-in-law will not hold out to

him a helping hand, but a sword,—by the point, too. Francis II. will follow the lead of Russia, Prussia, and England. They are the real allies, the real union. He will never desert them, but will help them to crush Napoleon. So, I pray you, tell the Empress that in the dark days which I foresee, I shall come, ready to give for her my blood, my life ! ”

“ You have strange fears, Neipperg. Now go, and do not try to see the Empress.”

“ But I promised her father to see her and find out from her if she were happy, if Napoleon were kind to her. He loves his daughter, and sometimes reproaches himself for sacrificing her to his interests.”

“ Does Francis II. need so mysterious an ambassador to find out the sentiments of his daughter ? Is not the Empress at liberty to write to her father ? ”

“ You forget Savary.”

“ Savary ? ”

“ Yes ; he has organized a private bureau ; no letter goes to Vienna unopened. The Duke of Rovigo is a past master in the art of fumigating letters, of unsealing them, and re-sealing them. The Emperor of Austria knows it, and has authorized me to ask a private interview of her majesty. That is why I shall go, undisguised, to the palace.”

“ Neipperg, be reasonable ; do not be reckless ; do not compromise the Empress.”

“ Never ! ”

“ Promise me to go away at once without seeing her Majesty.”

He hesitated, and Catharine insisted.

"Who would help you to see her Majesty?"

"Madame de Montebello."

"The lady of honor! Ah, my dear Count, do you know since General Ordener became ill, Lefebvre has been given orders to act as grand marshal of the palace. He is responsible for the entry there of any outsider. Oh, Neipperg, do not place Lefebvre between his friendship for you and his duty to his Emperor."

"Would Lefebvre let them shoot me?"

"If the Emperor commanded it—if you were found here, yes! Go, then, I implore you, in the name of our old friendship, in the name of Henriot, your son, to whom the Emperor has been kind, and whose career you may ruin, for whom you may spoil all the future by a hopeless, mad interview of a moment. Go!"

"I have heard you. And as for Lefebvre, and I will not tax him so far. I have decided—I will go."

"At once?"

"Yes," said Neipperg, slowly and hesitatingly, like a man who seeks to deceive; "a coach waits for me on the Soissons road; I will go and find the clerk whose place I took and send him back to Paris, and I will take the road toward Germany. Farewell—you will give the ring back to her Majesty, and tell her——"

Some one knocked, and Lise entered.

"What is it? Why do you disturb me?" Catharine asked quickly.

"It is M. de Remusat, his Majesty's chamberlain, who wants to see Madame la Duchesse."

"A chamberlain? Oh, yes, I know," said Catharine, under her breath. "Probably about a scrap I had with the Emperor's sisters. I spoke freely to them. They complained, and the Emperor probably wants me to explain. Go—tell M. de Remusat to enter!" she said to Lise, who tried hard to hear what her mistress had to say to the clerk.

"Farewell, sir," softly.

"So madame is satisfied with the hat?" asked the apparent clerk, loudly.

"Quite so, you may present my compliments to your chief."

And the Duchess of Dantzig threw herself into a chair to receive with becoming dignity the Emperor's chamberlain.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FAITH OF THE LAUNDRESS.

MONSIEUR de REMUSAT'S order was very formal:

"The Emperor wanted the Duchess of Dantzig to appear at once in his study."

M. de Remusat being gone, Catharine hastened to dress, and throwing on a cloak started to present herself.

The Emperor was busy delivering orders to his officials. He signed the papers before him feverishly, nervously.

He read, with a fierce expression, the paragraphs in

foreign journals, which contained scandalous tales of himself and his sisters.

One in particular irritated him. It told that M. de Neipperg, the Empress's guard, had been disgraced and sent back to her father; and that, so it insinuated, since the departure of her knightly servitor, Marie-Louise had languished in despair, owing to Napoleon's jealousy.

Added to this, he had heard a quarrel between his sisters, Elisa being ever more and more jealous of the fact that Caroline was a queen. They had begun in French and ended in the Corsican *patois* of their earlier days. He had tried in vain to quiet them.

So the Maréchale Lefebvre, against whom these two had complained loudly, came at an ill moment.

As a last resource, as a supreme defence, she had, before starting out, taken from among her jewels an old, time-yellowed paper. She slipped it inside her dress, after regarding it tenderly for a moment, as a witness of the past; and calmly went down the palace halls, to the door of the Emperor's private study.

Roustan, the faithful servant, was on duty.

An aide-de-camp announced the Duchess of Dantzig, and retired.

Catharine entered, bowed, and waited.

It was so quiet that one could distinctly hear the clock ticking on the mantel-shelf,

Suddenly the Emperor looked up.

"Ah—are you there, Madame la Maréchale? I have heard fine tales of you—what was the last one? Always violent language, crude expressions, such as

make the journalists all over Europe laugh at my court ! You are, I know, unable to use the language of courts—you never learned it—I do not blame you for your ignorance. I am only sorry that Lefebvre married while he was still a sergeant."

Napoleon stopped, went over to the table where the coffee stood and took up a cupful.

Then turning to Catharine who stood, calm, immovable, he continued : " Your remaining at court is become impossible. You must leave—your pension shall be secured you—and in such a way that you will not need to complain of your fortune. Your divorce will not alter your title nor your privileges. I told Lefebvre all about it—did he speak to you ? "

" Yes, sire—he told me all ? "

" What did you say ? "

" I laughed at him. "

The Emperor in his surprise let go of his cup which fell with a metallic ring, into its silver saucer.

" What ? What did Lefebvre say, what did he do ? "

" He kissed me and vowed he would not obey you. "

" This is too much ! Do you dare to speak thus to me, your Emperor, your master ? "

" Sire, it is true : you are our master, our Emperor, " answered Catharine firmly ; " you can dispose of all our goods, of our existence ; Lefebvre and I owe you everything. You are the Emperor, and, with a sign, a simple move of your hand, send to the Danube or the Vistula five hundred thousand men who will be happy to die for you. But you cannot make us two cease loving each other : you cannot part us. There your

power stops. If you thought to conquer here, you were mistaken."

"You think so? What say you to the tales I have heard? Did you not insult the Queen of Naples, and my sister Elisa? You do not respect your Emperor in the persons of his family. Can I tolerate such public impertinence?"

"Sire, you were misinformed. I only defended myself. I insulted no one. Your Majesty's sisters insulted the army!"

"Insulted the army? he cried, rising from his chair; what do you mean? Who insulted the army?"

"Sire, your sisters outraged the army in my person," Catharine answered proudly with a military salute.

"Explain yourself."

"Sire, your Majesty's sisters reproached me with having been among the heroic soldiers of Sambre-et-Meuse whose glory may have been equalled, but cannot be surpassed."

"True! But how were you among them?"

"As cantinière of the old 13th. I went with Lefebvre."

"So you have fought?" asked Napoleon interested.

"Yes, sire,—at Verdun, Jemmapes, Altenkirchen—I was in the Army of the North, the Army of the Moselle, the Army of the Rhine, the Army of Sambre-et-Meuse,—eighteen battles."

"You have done well, very well," said he. "Lefebvre never told me all this!"

"Why should he, sire? He had honor and glory enough for two. It is only this occasion which makes

me mention it. Otherwise I should not have mentioned it. It's like my wound."

"You were wounded?"

"A bayonet cut—at Fleurus—in my arm."

"Permit me, madame, to touch that fair wound," and Napoleon gallantly took her hand and kissed the scar left by the Austrian's bayonet. When he attempted to do so a second time, she stopped him.

"Do you remember my visit to you long, long ago?"

"It was the 10th of August. I came that morning to your little room in the Hôtel de Maureaud."

"What were you doing there?" he asked, more and more interested in the Duchess of Dantzig.

"I came to bring you your washing—you needed the things."

Napoleon looked at her closely. He asked curiously—"You were then——"

"A laundress. Yes, sire—that is what your sisters cast in my teeth."

"Laundress! laundress!" repeated Napoleon. "You have done many things in your day; you were a laundress as well as a cantinière?"

"Sire, one earns an honest living as one can. One does not count the means if the work is good with bad debts. Do you believe there is a soldier in your palace who owes me a bill since then?"

"Do you expect me to pay you?"

"I count on your Majesty."

"You are mad."

"I ask only my due. Then, my creditor was poor—now, he is rich," she said, laughing.

And she drew forth the yellow paper, saying :

"See, he cannot deny his debt. Here is the letter in which he owns his debt, and prays me to wait a little. Look ! See what he wrote—' I cannot pay you now—my pay is insufficient for my needs, and to assist my mother, my brothers, and sisters, who have fled from the trouble in Corsica, and are in Marseilles. When I am once more in commission as an artillery captain——' "

Napoleon rushed toward her, took the letter and said, huskily: " Yes, that was I. Ah, how that crumpled paper, that faded ink bring back my youth ! Then, I was poor, unknown, devoured by ambition, uneasy for my family, preoccupied by the fate of my country. I was alone, without friends, without credit, with none to believe in me—yet you believed ; you, a simple laundress. Ah, I remember now ; you were kind, you were clever, too ; you, alone, perhaps, in that day, could see the future, and know that the little officer would rise above the little room whither you carried his washing and left it—in pity for his loneliness and his poverty. The Emperor will not forget again."

Napoleon was moved. All his anger was gone.

" Ah," he said, " I see you again in your room in the Rue des Orties. I seem to be there—your bedroom door was at the left—on the right, the street door. What was your name before you were married ? "

" Catharine—Catharine Upscher."

" Had you no other name—no nickname ? "

" Yes, they called me la Sans-Gêne."

"I have it. You have kept that name, too, at court."

"Ay; and on the battle-field, sire."

"True," said the Emperor, smiling. "You did well to defend your cantinière's short skirts against the insolence of court nobles: but avoid scenes which are disagreeable to me. Be at the chase to-morrow, Catharine Sans-Gêne, which I hold in honor of the Prince of Bavaria. Before all the court, before my sisters, I will speak to you in such fashion that none will dare reproach you with your humble origin, and the poor youth you shared with Murat, with Ney—ay, with me! But before we part, how much do I owe you, Madame Sans-Gêne?"

He felt in his pockets gayly.

"Three napoleons, sire."

She held out her hand.

"Faith," he said, "I haven't them."

"Never mind, sire, I'll trust you again."

"Thanks. Now, come, it is late: you must get home. Why, it is eleven o'clock, and all the palace is asleep. We should both be a-bed. I shall send Roustan with you."

"Sire, I am not afraid. Besides, who could enter the palace by night?" said the duchess calmly.

"None—yet through these empty halls some one must light your way."

He called softly, "Roustan."

The inner door opened, and Roustan appeared.

"Take Madame la Maréchale to her apartments at the other end of the palace," said the Emperor. "Take a light."

Roustan bowed, lighted a candle, and opened the door leading to a long gallery.

He started ahead of the *maréchale*, then, turning, he said with an Oriental coolness, and with an expression of gravity that made Catharine shudder,

"Sire, there's some one in the gallery! A man in white uniform! He is going toward the Empress's apartments!"

CHAPTER XII.

NAPOLEON'S MAMELUKES.

NAPOLEON had become terribly pale on hearing Roustan's cry, that a man was going toward the Empress's apartments.

"A white uniform," the Mameluke had said.

Who, wearing an Austrian uniform, could enter the palace by night, like a thief, and penetrate that portion closed to all? No one but the audacious courtier he had sent back!

Thus Neipperg's name came into the Emperor's mind. But he reflected for a moment.

"How absurd! Neipperg is at Vienna. I am unnecessarily alarmed. Ah, am I grown foolish, to think even of that Austrian! No, the white coat Roustan saw is doubtless some assassin, who thought to strike me in my sleep: but I am awake, and he will be caught."

So with the rapidity which characterized him on the battle-field, he signed to Roustan to put out the light

and get behind the door, ready to come when called. He then put out his study lights.

The imperial study was dark. The dying embers on the hearth lent a faint red glow, showing the door to the gallery.

The Emperor crept to the duchess's side, took her hand, pressed it hard, and whispered, "Hush !"

Catharine trembled, and the secret she divined seemed about to escape her lips.

She was sure Neipperg was the man whom Roustan had seen.

"Poor fellow, he didn't keep his promise !" she thought, sadly. "He came here to the Empress ; he is doomed. What shall I do ?"

She was quite at a loss.

She must wait the result of events.

All her blood, flooding her heart and choking it, it seemed, she sank upon a couch, against which Napoleon once more master of himself, leaned, watching the door.

A soft step was heard, and a light sound on the floor.

The door opened, and a woman's form was seen.

"Madame de Montebello," murmured Catharine, recognizing the lady of honor.

Napoleon pressed her hand hard, for he feared she would make a sound.

The presence of the lady of honor, who seemed to be conducting some one, aroused all his suspicions.

He followed, with an eye filled with rage, the slow and circumspect movements of Madame de Montebello,

who came to assure herself that neither the Emperor nor any one else was awake there.

He saw her go away and open the door to gain, no doubt, the Empress's apartments.

Then he rose and moved forward.

As he crossed the threshold, he stumbled against a man who said to him, "Duchess, may I pass?"

But Napoleon grasped him rudely, dragged him into the room, and cried, "Roustan!"

The Mameluke came, light in hand.

"Neipperg! It *is* he," cried Napoleon, enraged, recognizing the man he held.

A woman's cry answered the Emperor's exclamation.

Madame de Montebello, surprised at the moment she was about to open the Empress's door, revealed her presence thus.

In his anger, Napoleon had forgotten her.

"Roustan, hold that woman," he said, pointing to her, "and come again when I call you."

The man captured Madame de Montebello.

"Now, sir," said Napoleon to Neipperg, to whom Catharine had looked pityingly and hopelessly. "what are you doing in my palace? It is night—you come like a thief. I thought you were in Vienna. How come you here? Answer me, sir," said Napoleon, huskily, trying to control himself.

Neipperg, pale but calm, answered: "Sire, I had left Vienna!"

"Why?"

"On my sovereign's order."

"To what end?"

"To carry a confidential message to her Majesty, the Empress. She is my queen."

"Ah—you come on a midnight embassy? You are laughing at me, Monsieur Envoy!"

"Your Majesty had sent me away; the entry by day was impossible, so I had to come at a lonely hour."

"It is past midnight—scarce an hour to present letters."

"It is the hour my sovereign indicated."

"The Empress gave you a right to come to her at midnight—in her chamber?"

"At midnight her Majesty was to give me an answer I asked of her in the name of the Emperor, my master."

"The Empress could not have made any such engagement. You lie, sir!"

Neipperg trembled at the insult.

"Sire," he said, between his teeth, "I am an Austrian general, I have the rank of a minister plenipotentiary; I am here to represent my sovereign to an Austrian arch-duchess. You insult me—in your palace, where I cannot answer you. To do this where I cannot demand my due is cowardice, sire!"

"Wretch," cried the Emperor, beside himself at the audacious impertinence of this man who tried to brave him, in his own hall, after trying to steal an interview with his wife.

Beyond all restraint Napoleon raised his hand to

Neipperg's breast, and said, " You came by night, like an assassin, to my house ; you are unworthy the noble emblems of your rank."

With an impulsive movement he snatched the orders from Neipperg's uniform.

Exasperated, Neipperg cried, " Ah, death to you !" and drew his sword.

Catharine threw herself between them.

" Roustan, come," cried the Emperor, who was defenceless.

In the twinkling of an eye the door opened and Roustan fell upon Neipperg, flung him to the ground, disarmed him, and gave a peculiar whistle.

Three other Mamelukes, placed under his orders to guard Napoleon's person, came and helped him to secure Neipperg.

Catharine had gone to the Emperor.

" Grace, sire ! be lenient," she begged.

But Napoleon, pushing her aside, went to the door and called, " Monsieur de Lauriston ! Monsieur de Brigode ! Monsieur de Remusat ! Come here, all of you !"

Instantly, the chamberlain, the aides, all who were within call, came running.

" Gentlemen, here is a man who raised his sword against me. M. de Brigode, take his sword. M. de Lauriston, secure his person !"

The Mamelukes helped Neipperg to rise.

M. de Brigode took his sword ; M. de Lauriston laid his hand on the shoulder of the count, who stood like marble. He said : " In the name of the Emperor, sir,

"I arrest you." And to Napoleon, "Where shall I take the prisoner?"

The Emperor answered, "Guard Monsieur de Neipperg in your own room. Let some one summon the Duke de Rovigo. We must take measures for an immediate court-martial, to establish the identity of the culprit, and, after his flagrant attempt upon my person, to read his sentence. At daybreak all must be over."

And while Neipperg was being conducted to the aides' quarters, Napoleon turned, pale and anguished, toward his own room, leaving all those who had been spectators of this tragic scene.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DEBT OF THE CANTINIÈRE.

THE duchess had remained as if stunned on hearing the terrible words of Napoleon.

She sought vainly a means of saving Neipperg.

To think of interceding for him with the Emperor would have been folly. Neipperg was condemned. Nothing could change Napoleon's vengeance. The all-powerful sovereign would punish the husband's wrong.

She went over a score of plans, each more impossible, more impracticable than the rest. Suddenly Lefebvre entered.

He was in full uniform, and looked anxious and grieved over Neipperg's arrest, of which an aide-de-camp had told him.

"Ah," said his wife, "you know——"

"Everything, alas ! The unfortunate man has sacrificed himself."

"Is there no way of softening the Emperor, of obtaining grace ?"

"None. The Emperor has sent for me. As marshal of the palace, the sad lot falls to me to preside at the court-martial which is to judge that unfortunate man."

"And you will obey ?"

"Can I disobey the Emperor ?"

"You know how the Count de Neipperg saved my life at Jemmapes. They would have shot me like a dog ; but for him, I should not be here."

"Yes, we owe him a great debt," said Lefebvre, in a sad tone ; "and, then, you saved his life on the 10th of August—and yet, O God, I can do nothing for him ; my duty stands between. Oh, there come times when duty is hard, and when one questions the justice of discipline and obedience. Still, I shall execute the Emperor's orders, but he ought to give this one to some one else."

"I am not marshal of the palace. I have no duty to fulfil—no orders to execute. I am a woman. I pity him. We spoke of a debt. The cantiniere contracted it ; the duchess will pay it. Let me go."

"What will you do ?"

"The impossible ! Who, Lefebvre, can get audience of the Empress ?"

"Now? No one."

"No means of passing a single word, of recommending prudence, of letting her know——"

"No, I only may approach her door to see that the sentinels are at their posts."

"You? Why," said Catharine, joyously, "there is still a saving clause. Lefebvre, will you help me?"

"How? I do not understand. You know in such a time as this I need things explained."

"Listen. Try to place yourself very near the Empress's sleeping apartment."

"That is easily done."

"Make a sound to awake her. See that she recognizes your voice. The presence of a marshal at her door at night will arouse her. She will want to know the cause of this tumult. She will be uneasy when she misses her lady-in-waiting. Do you see?"

"A little. When I have made this stir, what then?"

"You must say loudly to the sentinels, 'Be careful that no one enters the Empress's room. Seize any one who is found with a letter, though it be for the Emperor of Austria.' You must say very loudly the name of the 'Emperor of Austria.' Do you see?"

"Not quite—go on."

"No; only go, and go quickly."

Lefebvre went, thinking of his wife's order, "Above all say loudly the name of the Emperor of Austria!"

While Lefebvre went off, his wife sought for help and advice near by.

There was no one who cared for the prisoner's fate.

M. de Lauriston came from the Emperor and asked for the Duc de Rovigo.

"Where is the minister of police? Why is he not here? He doesn't even know what is going on!"

"The present minister of police knows absolutely nothing," said a high, sarcastic voice.

"Monsieur Fouché! Heaven sent you," said Catharine, running up to him.

"Most men think me damned, and now I am told I am sent from above!" said the former minister of police, with his foxy face and his pale, smooth cheek. "What can I do for you?"

"You can do me a great service."

"What? You know I am always your friend. We are old acquaintances; you knew me when I fought on the streets of Paris with no fortune but my Revolutionary ardor; you were then a laundress—now you are duchess."

"And, as was foretold, you have been minister of police."

"Have been! and shall be again!" said Fouché, with one of his strange smiles. "But what can I do for you, my dear Duchess?"

"You know what has happened to M. de Neipperg?"

"Yes, they are waiting for M. de Savary to see that he is shot."

"He must not die. You are now Duke of Otranto; I count on your help to save him."

"Mine? Pray, why? M. de Neipperg is an Austrian, an avowed enemy of the Emperor's; he is neither friend nor relative of mine; I do not see why I should

concern myself in the matter, in the case of a man who cast himself into the arms of Mamelukes instead of those of a pretty woman ! ”

“ My dear Fouché, do not be heartless.”

“ Show me why I should take an interest in Neipperg, and I will place what ability I possess at your disposal. I had thought, I own, to do something for him, but how can I ? ”

The sudden arrest of Neipperg had, in fact, ruined some of Fouché’s plans, for the latter knew all his affairs and would, according to circumstances, have delivered him over to Napoleon or let him escape.

So he was put out. He had tracked Neipperg long and steadily, only to have Roustan catch him !

The duchess’s words gave him some hope.

“ What interest, my dear Duchess,” he asked, with an insinuating smile, “ have you in the fate of M. de Neipperg ? ”

“ A considerable interest. You wish to be once more minister of police ? ”

“ Yes, for the good of the State and the safety of the Emperor simply,” said he, modestly.

“ Here is your chance. Save M. de Neipperg.”

“ And expose myself to the chances of being exiled by His Majesty ? ”

“ Not at all. Listen. Since there is not the shadow of an intrigue between the Empress and Monsieur de Neipperg——”

“ Oh, not the least ! You are sure ? ”

“ Quite. M. de Neipperg can prove his innocence. But not alone ! ”

"With whose help?"

"The Empress's."

"True. She is the interested party. But how——"

"If you will delay the convening of the court-martial to decide the execution—to keep Savary away—to give the Empress time to interfere—then our man is saved."

"Ah!"

"The Empress, knowing that through you the execution was delayed, and being angry with Savary, will prevail upon the Emperor to reinstate you. She will praise your ability, protest against the injustice of your removal, and make her august spouse put you again at the head of his police ministry."

"Duchess, I am convinced. I will try to save him."

"How?"

"I will see the Emperor at once."

Just then Constant, the Emperor's valet, came out.

"Will you tell the Emperor I am here, my good Constant; I wish to speak with him?"

Constant bowed and withdrew.

"What will you say?" asked Catharine.

"I will show His Majesty that it is impossible to deliver an order of execution at once without regular proceedings, without judgment, upon a man found by night in the palace; that he will be ridiculed; that he will compromise the Empress, irritate the Austrian court, and, at the same time, justify all the scandalous tales afloat concerning an intimacy between M. de Neipperg and Marie-Louise."

"Ah, here comes Constant."

"Will his Majesty see me?"

"His Majesty will receive the Duke of Otranto; but only after he has seen M. le Duc de Rovigo."

"Is that all his Majesty said?"

"His Majesty added, 'I cannot receive the Duke of Otranto now; I must first settle with M. de Neipperg.' So, monsieur, you must wait. Ah, here comes M. de Rovigo. I must announce him."

Savary had come, rather out of breath.

"Ah! What has happened? Do you know why the Emperor has sent for me in the middle of the night, you who pretend to know everything?" he said to his predecessor. And, he added scornfully, "I presume it is to you I owe this call. You have again given his Majesty a notion of a military conspiracy!"

"Not at all," said Fouché, in his most indifferent tone. "It is about M. de Neipperg, the former courtier."

"M. de Neipperg? Why, he is peacefully sleeping on his estates near Vienna. He hunts, he fishes, he plays the flute. I have just received a most detailed report. He is seen only near Vienna."

"My dear successor, tell that to the Emperor, and he will congratulate you on your accurate information."

"Oh, that is nothing. I shall simply tell him M. de Neipperg is at Vienna, to stay there!"

And Savary entered proudly into the Emperor's apartments.

"Neipperg knows your writing, does he not, Duchess?"

"Yes."

"Well, since Savary is here we must work rapidly.

Write as I dictate," and he handed her pen and paper. She wrote, not without an effort, two lines, ordering Neipperg to feign sleep, and then to get out of a window which would be noiselessly opened for him while the guards were drawn aside.

"Send this note to him," said Fouché to Catharine, "and say it is sent so he may write to his mother before he dies."

Catharine sent the paper and ink, and M. de Lauriston undertook her mission. He returned empty-handed. It was done—and none who had charge of Neipperg knew what had been sent him.

"I must leave you a moment, my dear Duchess," said Fouché, "I must post some of my men below the window, to receive our prisoner. You, Madame la Maréchale, must try to attract the attention of M. de Brigode, who, through an open door, watches Neipperg. Your protégé must get a chance to go to the window and leave his coat, as if he were sleeping under it. Good-bye, and do not despair!"

Fouché slipped out. Like a shadow, he glided among the officers and was gone.

Catharine, taking courage, called loudly: "M. de Brigode, will you kindly ask the Emperor if I may retire, or if I am to wait here?"

"The Emperor wants to see you, madame," said Napoleon's voice, behind her.

"Sire, I obey orders," said Catharine, trembling.

The Emperor's entry presaged no good. Would he hasten the execution? Savary was there! Would the prisoner have time to escape?

All these anxious thoughts tortured her.

"For once, you understand," said Napoleon, rudely to Savary; "try to be less incapable than usual. Go!"

"Sire," answered the Duke de Rovigo, bowing, "in three hours, at sunrise, the condemned will be no more, and no trace will be left of the place where his guilty body is laid."

And the minister of police took his departure.

"Now, madame," said the Emperor to Catharine, we too have an account to settle; or rather we three, for I shall send for Madame de Montebello." He had that lady brought to him. "Now leave us," he said.

He plied both ladies with questions. He wanted to extract a confession, a revelation. Madame de Montebello had brought Neipperg in, and guided him toward Marie-Louise's room; Maréchale Lefebvre had known him; during his sojourn in France Neipperg had often been at the Lefebvres'—an intrigue with the maréchale had even been hinted at.

Holding them with his piercing eye, Napoleon ordered them to hide nothing of the truth, however dreadful.

He must know if Marie-Louise were true or false, no matter how much it would hurt!

He almost feared to know the truth; and yet doubt was worse. He would gladly have said: "My crown, my sceptre, my empire, for a word, an indication, a proof!"

In his great mind, now so troubled, so dejected, a thousand confused thoughts arose. He made scores of conjectures.

With the tenacity of an officer of the Spanish Inquisition, he plied the two women with questions, fixing upon them his burning eye, losing no movement of face or figure, seeking to read their conscience, and their innermost thoughts.

By their firmness, they succeeded in allaying some of his suspicions.

His voice grew softer, his eye less stern, less cruel.

"So you think, Madame, the Duchess of Dantzig, that I am deceived in my opinion of the object of M. de Neipperg's visit here-to-night?" he said, in a less irritated tone. "*You really think* Madame de Montebello told the truth, when she said that it was only about a letter to be sent, confidentially, through M. de Neipperg, to my father-in-law?"

"Sire, I am persuaded that such is the truth, and the whole truth," said Catharine, firmly.

"Oh, would it were the truth!" murmured Napoleon, wistfully.

"But, sire, you can verify Madame de Montebello's statement," said Catharine, to whom a bold idea had come, which might persuade the Emperor.

"Tell me how!"

"Her Majesty is asleep—she knows nothing of what is going on in the palace."

"True—silence has been enjoined—the sentinels are forbidden to speak with her or her women."

"Then, sire, act as though you knew nothing. Let Madame de Montebello finish, under your own eyes, her interrupted mission, and you will see for yourself!"

“By Heaven, you are sensible, madame. I will try your experiment at once.” Only he added, severely, taking Madame de Montebello by the arm, “do not you play with me! Not a word, not a sign to warn the Empress. Forward! Remember, I am behind you!”

So the lady-in-waiting started toward the Empress’s apartments, her knees shaking, her body trembling convulsively, for she did not know that the Empress had been warned by Lefebvre’s loud words to the sentinel, in regard to intercepting her letter and sending it to the Emperor.

Napoleon stood, burning, in a corner, his hands clenched, grasping the arm of a chair, listening, looking, with head thrown forward, eyes bright, and every nerve tingling.

Madame de Montebello, meantime, had entered the Empress’s room, and, leaving the door open, on the Emperor’s orders, said, distinctly :

“Madame, M. de Neipperg sends me to ask your answer—he is in the ante-chamber—what shall I say to him?”

The Empress sighed like one aroused from sleep, stretched her arms, and took, from a table beside her bed, a sealed letter, which she gave to Madame de Montebello, saying, “Here is the answer! Greet M. de Neipperg kindly for me—and leave me, for I am very sleepy.”

The lady-in-waiting returned to Napoleon, the letter in her hand.

He took it eagerly, opened and read it.

The Maréchale Lefebvre and Madame de Montebello watched his face anxiously.

They saw his brow clear ; and, as he read, suddenly he smiled and, pressing the letter between his hands, he lifted it, passionately, to his lips.

" Dear, dear Louise," he murmured ; " she *does* love me ! "

Then addressing the ladies, he said, " Ladies, you are right. Not one word here could disturb the most jealous of husbands. It is all politics. The Empress is not altogether of my opinion, but that is a trifle. Only one word of M. de Neipperg. My sweet Louise asks her father to choose, in future, another messenger, as the presence of that gentleman at my court has caused gossip. Ah, Duchess, I am too happy," he said joyously to Catharine.

" Now, sire, since your doubts are dead," said Catharine, " you will surely countermand that order about the Count de Neipperg."

" Let him go at once, and never return to my court, no, nor to France. I want no more of him. Heavens ! I couldn't think for a moment that he was guilty ! But he had a treasonable air. A poor thing, indeed, on the part of my father-in-law, to send thus to find out if I made his daughter happy," he said.

" As for poor Neipperg," he added, " you shall see ! "

And the Emperor, forgetting all his suspicions, called to M. de Remusat.

" Take," he said to him, " M. de Neipperg's sword,

there, on my desk, and give it to him, and invite him hereafter to put it to a better use."

"And then?" asked the chamberlain.

"Conduct M. de Neipperg to his carriage, and wish him a pleasant journey. M. de Neipperg is free."

"Alas! M. de Neipperg is dead," said a voice behind the chamberlain.

It was Savary who had entered, accompanied by aides and officers.

"Dead? Have you shot him already?" cried the Emperor. "Why this haste? You should have waited for the dawn!"

"Sire," Savary said, "I had intended to do so. But M. de Neipperg evaded me. He escaped by a window. Happily there were men posted there. They caught him. They put him into a vehicle and drove him to the place of execution in the forest. Listen, here is M. the Duke of Otranto, who was there."

"By chance," said Fouché, approaching.

"M. le Duc d'Otranto can tell your Majesty that all has gone as I have told you."

"You are a bungler," said the Emperor severely. "If M. de Neipperg escaped, you should have let him go. Don't you think so, Fouché?"

"Your Majesty is quite right. Had I had the honor to be still the minister of police, I should have guessed that something would turn up. I should have known that when the Emperor knew all he would surely pardon."

"Yes, one must foresee things," said the Emperor to

Savary, "you cannot foresee anything, therefore you cannot administer justice."

"It happened," continued Fouché, profiting by the Emperor's approval, "that another order should have been given to the officers to wait final instructions at the place of execution—that is what I should have done had I been in power to do it."

"It's a pity you were not," said Napoleon.

"Really, sire? Then pardon me but I acted as if I had been."

"How?"

"Seeing that there was a mistake, and sure that, when your Majesty was assured of all interested parties you would regret your hasty decision and pardon M. de Neipperg, I took it upon myself to give orders to the men. I knew I could rely upon them. I told them to turn their backs on the forest and conduct M. de Neipperg to the Soissons road. They believed me to be again minister of police."

"So you are," cried Napoleon, charmed at Fouché's solution of the difficulty.

"Those men obeyed me, sire, so well, that M. de Neipperg is not dead, as M. de Rovigo has told you. M. de Neipperg is going toward Soissons, where he will be at breakfast time."

"My compliments, Duke of Otranto, you are a precious servitor—you divine what others cannot see. But, tell me, were you quite sure I would pardon?"

"Almost sure, sire. I had spoken with the Duchess of Dantzic."

"But you let a prisoner of State escape. That was serious."

"Sire, I had men sent in advance to Soissons. I should have been able to re-arrest him."

"You are a devil—you see everything," said Napoleon, in a gracious tone.

And, turning to the Maréchale Lefebvre, he added, "I fancy it is time, Madame la Duchesse, for you to rejoin your husband. As for me, I shall awake the Empress and assure her that her letter to Vienna has been sent."

Just then Lefebvre entered for orders.

"The Emperor has pardoned," Catharine said to him, "and, as you know, dear, he no longer wishes to part us."

"Bravo! I thank you, sire," said the marshal, moved by the Emperor's leniency.

"Lefebvre, when one has a wife like yours, one clings to her," said Napoleon, smiling.

Happy in the assurance that Marie-Louise was true, pleased that he had been lenient, satisfied that Neipperg, thanks to Fouché, had escaped Savary, Napoleon lifted Catharine's face and kissed her—a mark of unusual favor at his court. "Good-night, Madame Sans-Gêne," he said.

And, glad at heart, Napoleon went to seek his wife, Marie-Louise. All this was nine months prior to the birth of the King of Rome.



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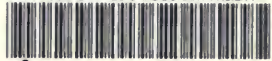
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